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SWAMI NIRMALANANDA

HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS

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BY

HIS DISCIPLES, DEVOTEES

AND

ADMIRERS

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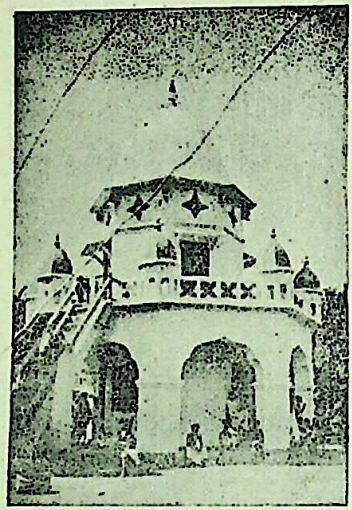

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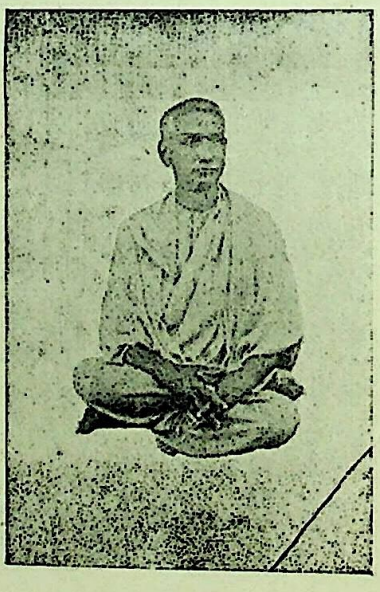

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HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS

BY

HIS DISCIPLES, DEVOTEES AND ADMIRERS

PRICE :

Full Calico Bound Rs. 5. Half Bound Rs. 4/8

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PUBLISHED BY

SWAMI VISHADANANDA

Secretary :

SRI NIRMALANANDA TEMPLE COMMITTEE.

SRI NIRANJAN ASHRAMA

SRI RAMAKRISHNA NAGAR,

(via) Ottapalam.

(SOUTH MALABAR.)

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THE RAJAGOPAL PHOTO-ZINCO AND POWER PRINTING WORKS.

FORT, BANGALORE CITY.

MAY 1943

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PREFACE.

This small volume in our humble tribute to the memory of the Swami Nirmalanandaji. To us and to thousands of others in the Motherland he was a teacher, father, mother, friend and more than all that, he was life and light—a ray of the Spiritual Sun that shone at Dakshineswar.

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was the perfect embodiment of the Sanatana Dharma, the Religion Eternal. Each one of His direct disciples, while giving to the world His great message of the Hormony of all Religions, embodied in himself, a part of the highest ideal of the Master's All-sided Perfection.

Sri Swami Nirmalanandaji embodied the ideal of purity, and he naturally represented the strength and fearlessness resulting from that purity. The Gospel of Strength is what the world in general, and India in particular, needs most at this present epoch. "His Life and Teachings" have therefore a special value now, and the publishers feel confident that the readers will get the needed inspiration from the soul-stirring example and the life-giving words of this Spiritual Hero.

We are fully conscious that the tribute is not worthy of his greatness. It is incomplete and defective in many respects. The present world-situation has affected our labours to a very large extent. We could not collect all the materials which in normal times we could have easily got. We could not visit the many important places connected with the life. We have also had to economise in space and time and energy. Due to various inconveniences certain printing mistakes have also taken place for which we have added an errata. It is with great diffidence, therefore, that

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impelled by a sense of duty, we place this before the public.

The reader may note that the account of the Swamiji's work in certain places in Kerala is given in greater details than that in other places. The Swami was always intensely active wherever he was. A narration of all his activities will require sevreal volumes. The account given here will give the reader a glimpse of the Swamiji's unremitting work in other places also.

Soon after the Swami's Mahasamadhi, his disciples and devotees resolved, in perpetuation of his memory, to build a temple to instal his sacred relics and to offer him daily worship. A committee consisting of the following was formed to collect funds and carry on the work.

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" Nirvikarananda.
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" K Padmanabha Pillai, Pandalam.
" K. Gopala Pillai, Calicut.
" Kanoor Madhavan Nair, Cheramangalam.
" M. S. Reddiar, Trivandrum.

The temple was constructed in a very short time. Thanks to the liberal contributions by disciples, devotees and friends the "small building—Octagonal with veranda all-round, ornamental arches, minior ceiling, upper story with decorative domes on the eight corners, ornamental railings of reinforced concrete in between the corners and a minior dome over the upper room"—was ready for opening in December

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1939. The temple was consecrated and the relics duly installed on the 25th of December. Worship is being daily conducted.

It was further desired by the devotees and decided by the committee to publish a Life of the Swamiji. The Secretary of the Committee, Swami Vishadananda, was deputed to carry on the work.

While bringing out the book we desire to express our gratitude to all those friends, admirers, devotees and disciples of the Swami who have helped us in this great work. Special mention has to be made of the devoted services of Sri N. Kunhirama Pathiyar B.A., Retired Principal, Sanskrit College, Pattambi, in editing the book. We have also to record the valuable services rendered to us by the great linguists scholar and devotee, Sri P. Seshadri Iyer, M.A., M.L., Trivandrum. In conclusion we have to mention that it is the munificent donations of H. H. Ramavarma Thampuran, Seth Purushotham Das Iswardas, Seth Khattawoo Khimji, Sri K. P. Parukutty Amma and others of Palat House, Sri Ambadi Sankara Menon, B.A., B.L., Professor Nandipathy Mukherji, Sri K. J. Chengappa, Sri T. V. Krishnan Nair, B.A., B.L., Rao Bahadur H. C. Javariah, Sri Shambhu Barhmeswara Prasad, Sri K. Parameswaran Pillai and a number of others that enabled us to bring out the book inspite of the unfavourable circumstances. Our thanks are due to Sri M. Rajagopal Naidu, Proprietor, Rajagopal Photo-Zinco and Power Printing Works, Bangalore City, who voluntarily undertook the printing work at a minimum cost as a sacred duty towards the Swamiji.

The sale proceeds of this publication will be utilised for the upkeep of Swami Nirmalananda Memorials.

SWAMI VISHADANANDA.
Secretary, Sri Nirmalananda Temple Committee,
Sri Niranjan Ashrama,
1st May 1943. Sri Ramakrishna Nagar, Ottapalam.

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SWAMI NIRMALANANDA

HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS

CHAPTER I.

WORSHIP BEARS FRUIT

"Avatara hyasamkheya
Hareh Satwanidherdwijah"

Sri Bhagavata, III, i—26.

(Ye twice-born ones, the Incarnations of Hari, the Treasure-house of Supreme energy, are innumerable, indeed.)

OF all the Avatars of Hari, Sri Rama and Sri Krisha have been, naturally, the most popular. The advent of Rama made an epoch in the history of Avataras itself. The earlier Incarnations were more or less solitary figures; they accomplished their objects single-handed. Their prowess and activities were manifested more on the physical than on the mental or moral plane. Rama made a departure. He had companions and friends to help Him in His leela. They were not all Aryans. Guha, Sugreeva and Vibhishana were some of His best friends. He was the first great cosmopolitan. In Him were blended physical strength, intellectual greatness and moral grandeur in overflowing measures. He was also the first Avatar to go through the whole gamut of human experience. Keen disappointments, bitter struggles and poignant sorrows filled His cup. These were the price he paid for the deliverance of Bharata-varsha from Rakshasic domination.

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Coming in a later Yuga with different social, political and religious conditions, Krishna had to be different in many respects. He began life as the playmate of the lowly; even as boy He set His face against and dissuaded His father from performing Vedic Sacrifices to the gods; in His teens He became not a king, but a king-maker which He remained throughout His life; for the intellectuals, He harmonised the different systems of philosophy, and for the unlettered, He unlocked the treasure of life-giving love.

While Rama appeared as pre-eminently human, Krishna seemed ever to remain on the border-land of Divinity. The two together may be said to have summed up the possibilities of human evolution.

The sphere of action of the old Avataras was, however, limited regionally as well as personally. It was reserved to this age of material science, rationalism and internationalism to lash up mighty waves of conflicting thoughts and to raise world-wide and complex problems for solution. Science opened up all the dead past, and rationalism questioned every settled faith. The very foundations of life and conduct were in imminent danger of being shaken and smashed. A new adjustment was called for. It became necessary to examine all the past, to unearth everything that was of value, buried therein.

The work was no longer local, nor even continental, it was global. A new head, a new heart, a new cosmic-power was the demand of the age. A new Avatar expressing all that was true in the past and all the possibilities of the future,—a Rama and a Krishna combined in one—this was what the world prayed for. A demonstrator of Fundamental Unity, a bestower of Supreme Peace, this was what the age of material sciences yearned for.

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The prayer was granted. The Power took form. It appeared as a boy born of Brahmin parents in a village in Bengal. The span of his mortal life was but fifty-three summers. Yet, he lived the life of all the Prophets of old. He realised and demonstrated that their lives and words were all true. Like Rama, he struggled and freed Bharatavarsha of Rakshasic culture-domination. Transcending all limitations and becoming one with Truth, he ever remained in Bhava-mukha. From the heart of Being, he brought out what the world was panting for; Truth and Peace. He distributed them broadcast. To-day He is the world-figure known as Sri Ramakrishna.

To continue the work after Him, to bear His torch to the farthest limits of the globe, He left a few chosen young men, intelligent, educated, pure and strong. Their leader was the Super-man, Swami Vivekananda. He was a Kayastha and Dutta by birth. The only other Dutta disciple of Sri Ramakrishna was Swami Nirmalananda. These two had many a trait in common. Indomitable Kshatra Veerya was one of them.

The tradition seems to be true that the Kayasthas of Bengal have Kshatriya blood in them. From that community have sprung up some of the most eminent men of Bengal in modern times also—Sj. R. C. Dutt, J. C. Bose, C. R. Das and S. C. Bose among others.

In the Dutta branch of the Kayastha community there was one Purushothama Dutt of Bharadwaja gotra from whom in the 22nd generation was descended Bhairavachandra Dutt who lived in Bighati village in the District of Hugly. He was a very pious and cultured gentleman. His tutelary deity was Radhakanta with Radha Rani. The very beautiful images of these two are preserved and worshipped in the family to this day. The inscription at the foot of the images bears

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the Bengali year corresponding to 1770 A. D. The image of Radhakanta with flute in hand is made of black touch-stone and that of Radha Rani of Ashtaloha (eight metals). Besides these there are Salagram and Banalinga which are also worshipped daily. Although his tutelary deity was Radhakanta, Bhairavachandra was a worshipper of Sakti also having been duly initiated into that cult. Durga puja used to be celebrated in his house with great pomp and solemnity twice a year. All other festivals of the Mother, such as Jagaddhatri puja were also celebrated. The 'Doljatra' of Krishna was an imposing spectacle with display of fire-works and staging of dramas. There was a festival or a feast in the house almost every day. Some family trouble made him leave the ancestral home and migrate to Baghbazaar, Calcutta, where he purchased a plot of land for Rs. 37 and put up a temporary dwelling house. He had two sons, the elder of whom was employed in an English Company. The younger Debnath Dutt was highly intelligent and enterprising. He became an expert in feeling the pulse (Nadeevijnana) of sick persons and accurately forecasting the time of their death. The wide-spread belief that death on the banks of the Ganges confers mukti brought his services very much in requisition. He became such a favourite with the people that they called him Ganga Dutta. His spirit of enterprise and industry led him to start a castor-oil mill, a flour mill, lac-work and a factory for the manufacture of sulphuric acid—the first of its kind in Calcutta. Success attended all his undertakings. Skilful and successful, rich and charitable, he was loved and respected by all. He also used to celebrate the Durga puja and other festivals on a grand scale. Besides the house in Baghbazaar with its spacious halls and out houses he had a house at Benares also. He married Srimati Takamani Devi, a very pious and talented lady who came from Benares. She brought happiness and prosperity to the family. After giving birth to five sons in succession, she de-

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voutly worshipped Tulasi (the sacred Basil plant) for a long time. The next child, the fruit of her ardent worship—was also a male. He was born in the house at 20, Bosepara Lane, Baghbazaar, Calcutta at about 8-30 P.M., on Wednesday the 23rd of December 1863, Sukla Paksha Chaturdasi Tithi and Rohini Nakshatra in the month of Dhanu. In loving memory of the worship the child was named Tulasicharan, also called Tulasi Das. He was their last son. Some years later he had a sister. Tulasi's horoscope foretold a very bright future for him, as bright as the powerful moon in exalted position and in its own navamsa. It indicated an extraordinary powerful mind for the native. The youngest son is *ipso facto* the mother's special favourite. More so was Tulasi. The circumstances of his birth, his charming face, his sparkling eyes, his keen intelligence, all these and more made him the pet of the family. Fondled too much by one and all he did not grow sturdy. He suffered in health. Medicines did not improve it. Ill-health did not affect his mind and will which were ever dominating and masterful, and his rich voice was naturally commanding. None wished or dared to oppose him even in those early days.

CHAPTER II.

MARKED OUT.

Tulasi's position as the pet of the family and his ill-health came in the way of his being sent to school. The prosperous family kept two establishments, one at Calcutta and the other at Benares and used to live in

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Benares for some months in the year. While at Benares his mother passed away at the residence at Ganesh Mahalla, Benares City, on the 30th December 1873, when he was 10 years old. After the period of bereavement the father saw how unwise it was to keep the boy confined to the house. He decided to put him to school at Benares under the protection of his maternal uncle who lived there. Thus after his eleventh year Tulasi began his school education in the Bengali Tola High School, Benares. The precocious child advanced rapidly winning double promotions in the school. There he became the classmate of Hariprasanna Chatterji who was afterwards known as Swami Vijnanananda. At home he was taught Sanskrit in which he soon acquired great proficiency. It was this grounding which he received in this language in the great seat of learning during these early years that enabled him later to teach the Upanishads, Brahmasutras and Gita to the Brahmacharins at Belur, and to converse fluently in Sanskrit with the scholars who visited him in South India. During this time he also mastered the Hindi language.

In Benares there was then living an extraordinary person, a Mahatma, the living Siva himself, as Sri Ramakrishna described him–the great Trailinga swami. Tulasi had the good fortune to visit him several times. The Swami was a Mouni then. Tulasi and other children would often go near and look at him as a curio or assemble round him in playfulness. He used sometimes to drive the boys away. On one occasion the Swami singled out Tulasi, beckoned him to go near him and smilingly and graciously gave him some prasad. Though the Swami was a Mouni he was not dead to the world. Once there was a knotty problem which the learned Pandits wanted to solve, but could not. They approached the Swami and explained the matter to him. He ordered for a slate and pencil and gave them a written reply which satisfied them.

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Tulasi did not know much of the Swami or of religion and did not realise what it all meant. But he found that the Prasad was very sweet. He used to say in after years that initiation was of different kinds. One of them was through the stomach. This was perhaps his first stomach initiation. While Tulasi was in Benares, his father passed away at his Calcutta residence on Friday, the 23rd November 1877. Thereafter Tulasi came to Calcutta to study for the entrance examination of the Calcutta University.

As a student he realised how invaluable was sound health. Medical treatment not having helped him to any appreciable extent he decided to help himself by means of systematic physical exercise. He soon mastered the science and art of physical culture, became an expert gymnast, sportsman and athlete and he grew roboust in health. Not being content with being healthy himself, he wanted other young men to regain their health and to teach them gymnastics he opened and managed seventeen free gymnasiums in different parts of Calcutta. This great interest in physical culture did not affect his literary studies in the least. In regular course he passed the entrance examination in the year 1883, got a certificate of merit and a medal from His Highness the Raja of Talchar, Orissa, for general proficiency.

In Baghbazaar, the house of Harinath (Swami Turiyananda) was opposite to that of Tulasi. A portion of Tulasi's house was for a time occupied by Gangadhar (Swami Akhandananda) and his father. These three were fast friends. They and other young men used to meet in the quadrangle of Tulasi's house which was later occupied by the Boses. A portion of their ancestral house was the quarter where Vaikuntanatha Sanyalmahasaya's house was situate.

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CHAPTER III.

CHOSEN.

After finishing his studies in Benares, Tulasicharan came to Calcutta to pursue his studies in the College. The impact of western education and culture had undermined the religious beliefs and faiths of many a College student of those days. Some became rank atheists, some had grown sceptics, others had doubts and misgivings and most of them were restless at heart, pining for a haven of rest. It would seem that, that malady did not affect Tulasicharan. He was born and brought up in a family which was deeply religious for generations, which conducted the daily worship of all its household deities and solemnised the half-yearly annual festivals of most of them on a grand scale. The atmosphere of his family had the religious fragrance. From his boyhood he had a religious bent of mind and practised meditation. His faith had not received any rude shock. His boat was sailing fast on a placid stream. What river was it to join, what was its destination, he did not care to question. He was content to live the religion of his forefathers, in utter purity of thought and action. He laid himself in the hands of the Mother of the Universe. How she led him to the Supreme Goal, how Tulasicharan became Nirmalananda has already been made known to the world through the mass of literature that has grown round the names of the All-Gods, Ramakrishna — Vivekananda. It bears repetition; it has to be repeated by his chroniclers, in his own words and in the words of those who knew it first-hand—his own gurubhais and associates.

A leader never loses sight of the minutest details in the movement he leads; he leaves nothing to chance.

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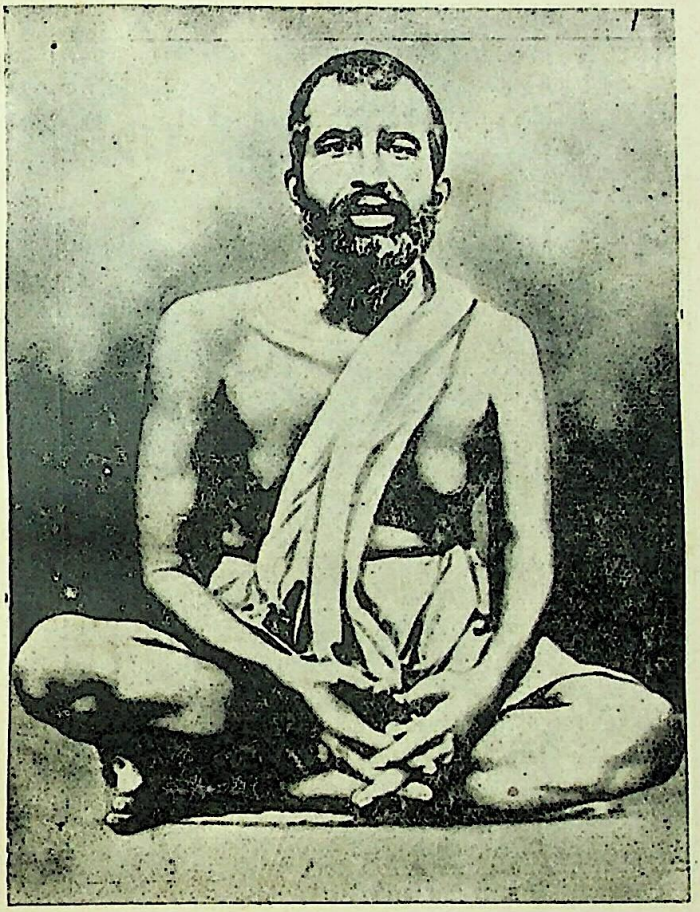

SRI RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA

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SRI SARADAMANI DEVI

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In the vast movement which we see as the universe, there is no chance, there is no place for it. Every small event, every trifling incident, has its purpose and meaning. It was not chance that brought Tulasi-charan's grand-father to Baghbazaar—the very dust of whose lanes and bye-lanes has been made holy by the touch of the Divine feet. It was one of the many fine stages where the Yugavatar enacted his leela. It was a rich pond where he had his net, and his catch was superb—Harinath, Tulasi and Gangadhar. In Tulasi's own words this was how he was caught, how his boat was floated on to the Ganges.

" Nivedita lane and the tank on that side formerly belonged to us. The quadrangle in front of the house occupied by the Boses now (1928) in Bosepara lane was the place where we boys used to meet. There we were chatting one day when we heard that Paramahamsa had come to the house of the new Kayasthas. Balaram Bose had recently purchased that property from the Banerjees who were Brahmins and so the house was called thus. At once all the boys ran. I also hurried to my house, put on a chaddar, for I was not acquainted with the Boses at that time, went to Balaram's house and found that the hall,—parlour and verandah—was full. In the middle of the hall there was spread a carpet on a cushion with pillows on. Paramahamsa was not there. I was but a lad of 17 or 18 summers and did not venture to go in as many of the elders of that quarter were seated in that hall. On the left side of the room was a verandah and I leaned against the wall there. I learnt that the Paramahamsa had gone in so that the ladies of the house might have an opportunity to meet him. A little later I saw a person clad in a towel of gerua colour (I think he had gone to the water closet) with leather slippers on coming through the door of the water-closet towards me. His eyes seemed not to observe anything, as if in a state of reverie, they were closed. Behind him there were a few persons. I did not know them. Suddenly he came

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to the place where I was standing and looked at me. He did not exchange a single word with me. I stood non-plussed and forgot even to salute him. At that moment, O, God, I felt a creeping sensation within my bosom. I felt a thrill from head to foot as if my body was becoming paralysed and I was inclined to weep. Afterwards, he staggered into the hall; I ran away to my house and laid myself on my bed. I said to myself, Oh! What kind of a Paramahamsa, I shall not go that way again. This was my first meeting with the Master. A few days after the above incident one day after finishing my mid-day meals I went to Hari Maharaj's house to see him. He was my friend from boyhood days and his residence was close to ours. I had heard that he used to go to the Paramahamsa of Dakshineswar. But I did not know that the Paramahamsa of Dakshineswar was this Paramahamsa. That day, it was Ekadasi and probably, a Sunday. Turiyanandaji told me 'Let us go for a bath in the Ganges'. At that time Turiyanandaji used to fast during day time and take some refreshment at night. "From there we shall go to meet the Paramahamsa at Dakshineswar". I accompanied him to the Ganges. After bathing he hired a boat and went to Dakshineswar with some others. I returned home, took my meals and walked all the way to Dakshineswar. Turiyanandaji and others were already there. Sri Ramakrishna had gone out. We walked all round and saw the various things to be seen there. At nightfall I went back to Sri Ramakrishna's room to offer my salutations there before returning when I found that there were many pictures in the room. Near the place where the vessel of water was placed was a photograph of Sri Ramakrishna. I pointed it out to Turiyanandaji and asked him as to whose photo it was. He replied that it was the photo of Sri Ramakrishna. I remarked that I had already seen him. "Where?" he asked. "At the house of Balaram Babu," I replied. "Then it is all right!" he said.

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"Shortly after this, one day I walked from my house to Dakshineswar alone. It was about half-past eleven or twelve when I reached the Kali temple. Without stopping anywhere I went direct to Paramahamsa Deva's room and found him taking his meals. I saluted him and sat on the floor in front of his cot. This was my first bowing down before him. I was so ignorant that it did not occur to me that I should not salute him while he was eating or sit by him. However, he did not mind the breaches of etiquette. He talked to me smiling all the time. When his meals were over a lady came from the verandah near the side of the Nahabat and removed the plates, etc. At that time there was no one else in the room. As I was a mere boy she had no delicacy in entering the room and doing the work. Later on I came to know that she was the Holy Mother. After finishing his meals, he washed his hands and mouth, sat on the cot with placid face and began to smoke and chew betal leaf. After a few preliminary questions he suddenly said something curious which astonished me. He said, "The other day a boy resembling you came here and asked me if I could act as his go-between." I did not quite understand him and wondered why he used that slang expression. As I kept silent, he at once read my mind and said, "No, no, by the word go-between, I mean one who brings about the meeting of a person with his beloved Lord. He is the guru, he is everything. There is no difference between Him and God." I understood that it was a hint thrown out to me to accept him in that light. After a while he came down from the cot and placing his left hand on my shoulder as a mark of favour, stepped out of his room and slowly walked towards the Panchavati. He went to the Javtala to answer the calls of nature. Ramlal or some other person accompanied him. Returning, with great tenderness he said to me 'come here now and then.' Then my heart was filled with joy. After reaching the Panchavati, he saluted the spot where he had practised

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Sadhana and sat on a lower step. Then in an exalted mood, he began to speak with the Divine Mother. I could catch the word Mother at intervals and knew that he was talking to the Mother. I could not, of course, hear the talk of the Mother. I was able to understand bits of the words of the Master. Shortly after, towards nightfall he returned to his room when I prostrated before him and returned home. He told me 'come again'."

When asked as to what Sri Ramakrishna said to the Mother, his reply was "All those things are personal. Why should you want to know them? "The human guru gives the mantra in the ear and the divine guru in the Prana." In the course of the conversation he repeated "Ah! the human guru imparts the mantra to the ear and the guru of the universe to the heart." What all things he said! But what right has the world to know about them? And what do you gain by knowing those things?" At a later date, on the 20th February 1931, in his inaugural address as Chairman of the first religious convention of Nikhil Bunga Ramakrishna Mahotsava, he said. "There were a thousand and one occasions when the Great Prophet himself used to remain a mute spectator before a thirsting soul with occasional glimpses of smiles hovering between his penetrating eyes and quivering lips. For verily, it is not the Vaikhari speech alone that speaketh, but the Pashyanti speech that rises in the heart like waves and passes beyond the bounds of the flesh, and falls like breakers on the hearts of the audience like sweet caresses to lull them, to soothe them, to embrace them. I am one of them who has had the good fortune to experience this touch, and I shall fail in my task if I do not carry that touch. May he infuse in me his Shakti".

He was highly reticent regarding personal matters which, in general, only satisfy curiosity and furnish food for talk. It is on the firm foundation of basic principles

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and eternal truth that man should mould his character and frame his conduct. Personal experiences always differ. They are but experiences in varying degrees of those principles and truth coming through the medium of different personalities. They are as much phenomena as any other in nature. Man should go behind them. But the tendency of the ordinary man is to take delight in the phenomenon and let the noumenon to take care of itself. That seems to be one of the reasons why he was extremely reticent and reserved in such matters. He has said so much regarding his first meeting with the Master on two occasions and for two different reasons. The first occasion was the publication of the Life of Ramakrishna (Mayavati Edition 1924). Swami Madhavanandaji—the present Secretary of the Mission who was in charge of that publication wrote to Swami Nirmalanandaji for an account of his meeting with Ramakrishna. The Swami could not refuse it. The substance of his answering letter is what is published in the life in the chapter 'Hari, Gangadhar, Tulasi and Hariprasanna. The reader will note that the account here given is substantially the same. Translation of the Swami's letter to Madhavanandaji will be found published in Part IV of this book. In it he says 'you have asked me to write an account of how I had the good fortune to meet Thakur, with a view to incorporating it in the new life'. After giving a few details he concludes. "As I have a love for you I write these incidents for your personal information. Do not communicate them to any one else or incorporate them in the new life of Sri Ramakrishna. Omitting these details you may mention in general on what occasions I had the good fortune to meet the Master. The letter is dated P. K. Office, Trivandrum, 23rd November 1923.

The second occasion was in 1928. The Swami was in the Ramakrishna Sevashrama, Benares, on the 25th February of that year. Swamis Viswarupananda, Heerananda and several others were present. In the

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course of conversation Swamiji said that he was brought up in Benares during his early years. "If so" he was then asked, "how did you get the opportunity to meet Sri Ramakrishna or Swami Vivekananda". In answer to them the Swami narrated the above incidents with very little variation and said that he said so much because "fables are gaining currency even while we are still alive". That day's conversation recorded by those present will be found published elsewhere.

After the first meeting, as above described, he used to go to the Kali Temple now and then, sometimes with Hari Maharaj (Swami Turiyananda) and sometimes alone. "After a few visits" said Swamiji at a later date "I was fortunate enough to be blessed with initiation or "upadesa" by him. When he used to come to Balaram Babu's house I would go and meet him. When he was lying ill at Cossipore I used to go there also. On hearing one afternoon the news of his Mahasamadhi the previous night, I went to the Cossipore garden. I bowed down to his form for the last time and placed my head on his feet. Then I returned home from the cremation ground at about 10 P.M."

Thus from about the year 1882 when Tulasi was about 18 years of age, till the Mahasamadhi of the Master in 1886 for nearly 5 years he had the good fortune and the privilege of associating with him, serving him and receiving his Divine grace.

Further details of his visit to his Master and of his association with his gurubhais during this period must, henceforth for ever remain unknown. Their precious memories have all been lost to us with the passing away of one and all of them. The solitary figure who has had access to some information on those points—Srijut Mahendranath Dutt, the revered brother of Swami Vivekananda—is, he regrets, too unwell to give those details. Although he was not as regular a visitor to

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Dakshineswar as some of his other gurubhais and although he was not one of the twelve who served the Master day and night at Cassipore, yet that he had become one of the inner circle and that making his Master, the polestar and refuge of his life he was doing tapasya at home is clear beyond all doubts. Speaking of the twelve, the revered author of Leelaprasanga—Swami Saradanandaji Maharaj says *"To satisfy the curiosity of the readers the names of these twelve young men are given below. Norendra, Rakhal, Baburam, Niranjan, Yogin, Latu, Tarak, Gopal Senior, Kali, Sasi, Sarat and Gopal Junior. Sarad on account of the persecution of his father used to come now and then and to stay for a day or two. * * * Hari, Gangadhar and Tulasi would come at intervals and practised Tapasya at home." § All the above were bound together by their common love and devotion to their Master, all were dedicated to him and all were destined to merge their entire selves in that supreme personality and to re-appear as so many of its facets.

Swami Abhedanandaji writes as follows in his Gospel of Ramakrishna (1907) as well as in the revised edition of that book published in 1939 under the title "Memoirs of Ramakrishna." "Among these were a few more devoted ones, like Sarad, Hari, Gangadhar, Subodh, Tulsi, who, afterwards joined the order and were known as Trigunatita, Turiyananda, Akhandananda Subodhananda and Nirmalananda. Bhagavan Ramakrishna received them all with equal kindness and was ever ready to help them."

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* Leelaprasanga IV Edition—V—391.

§ The name of Swami Vijnananandaji who is also a disciple of the Master is not included in the above list.

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CHAPTER IV.

DEDICATED.

After the Master's Mahasamadhi, there were still a few days left before the expiration of the lease of the Cossipore garden. Of the young disciples of the Master, some remained there, the others went back home and resumed their studies. The task of rallying these fell naturally on 'Noren' whom the Master had appointed their guardian. He often visited these young disciples at their homes, dragged them from their studies and injected into their drooping hearts the fiery message of renunciation. To Tulasicharan, these visits of Noren were inexpressibly welcome, for to him 'Noren' was his master himself in another form and Noren loved Tulasi very much. They with other disciples used to spend hours in Tulasicharan's house, conversing, singing, dancing, eating and smoking. The house was a prominent one in Baghbazaar, the inmates were very hospitable and Tulasi was practically the master of the house. Norendra led the party with music and Tulasicharan played on the Packwaj and other instruments. Tulasi would invariably ask the inmates to prepare meals or refreshments for the party. Tulasi's orders would be carried out to the very letter, not only because he was the practical master, but also because the inmates had great regard and affection for Noren and his Gurubhais. Swami Saradanandaji speaks as follows, "One day, after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) was singing the following invocation to Gayatri (in the very tone of the old Rishi he had heard in the vision) seated in the house of Tulasi Maharaj. "Ayahi varade devi triakshare brahmavadini. Gayatri Chandasam Matar Brahmayoni namostute." He was so much absorbed that he sang this invocation from 10 A. M. to 4 P. M. that day. After 4 P. M. he bathed and took his

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meals. In the Math (Belur) also he used to sing this invocation many a time losing all outward consciousness. But it was in Tulasi Maharaj's house the most intense absorption came upon him." (Sri Sri Saradananda Prasanga, Page 141.) On another day the party discoursed for long on various subjects. Then Noren began to sing and Tulasi followed with the Packwaj. After some time the fervour grew and the party began to dance on a wooden platform. They forgot themselves and their dance became the representation and play of joy divine. Some of the inmates were attracted by the music and dance and wanted to witness them at close quarters. In an adjoining room there was a parapet wall with a water cistern. One of the ladies—a sister-in-law of Tulasi—got up the wall and was peeping through a window. All on a sudden one of the legs of the wooden platform on which they were dancing gave way and the platform tumbled down. The dance was abruptly stopped. Tulasi might at once ask for refreshments. The sister-in-law jumped down in haste from the parapet wall. In so doing her foot struck against a broken bottle which was lying on the floor. The foot got deeply cut; blood flowed in profusion. Without flinching, without making any noise, she ran to the kitchen. The ladies there seeing a profusion of blood, raised a loud cry. Noren and the party hastened to the kitchen and seeing the cut, brought in a doctor immediately. After the wound was dressed they took some refreshment and dispersed.

Some days previously the relics of the Master had been removed to the rented house in Baranagore, the first monastery of the sanyasin disciples of the Master. "Gopal senior, the young lay devotee removed the Master's bedding and other things there from Cossipore and Sarat joined him at night. Gopal senior was the regular inmate. Norendra, Sasi, Sarat, Baburam and Niranjan used to visit the monastery every now and then."

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It may be mentioned here that Tulasi had to surmount an obstacle. He had a maternal uncle, Nityagopal a spiritually advanced soul who had established a religious sect of his own. It had many centres. Although Nityagopal was a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna and used to visit him frequently, he kept himself and his sect distinct and separate. He naturally wished his nephew, in whom he must have noticed great spiritual potentiality, to join him and his sect. An aged and spiritually developed man who also happened to be a maternal uncle could not be lightly brushed aside by a young student. But Noren and destiny prevailed. Noren's influence and Tulasi's determination overcame the resistance. The part joined the whole. One day Tulasi left home, kith and kin and college and all worldly connections behind him and like his Master's homa-bird flew up, and he became an inmate of the Baranagore Math.

CHAPTER V.

LIFE AT BARANAGORE, 1886 - 1892.

The house which became the first monastery of the Sanyasin disciples of Sri Ramakrishna " was situated between Dakshineswar and the city of Calcutta. It was a dreary place. For years it had had no tenants. For years it had the appearance of being deserted. It was in fact in a ruined condition and sadly in need of repair. Besides being very old, it had the reputation of being haunted. It was two storeys in height but the lower storey was absolutely useless, being the resort of lizards and snakes. The gateway had long since tumbled down. The verandah which flanked the front part of the upper storey showed signs of decay. The main room at the back part where the monks lived was in a most dilapidated state. Indeed, none others would have lived there for fear of the building giving way. To the east of the building was another house which was used as a

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sort of chapel where the family God of the owners was worshipped by a resident priest. To the west was a garden overgrown with weeds and tall brush and undergrowth so that it resembled a jungle. The rooms of the ground floor were never occupied during the time the monks remained there except one in which lived the gardener of the landlord. They were exceedingly damp and dingy and filled with all sorts of rubbish which several generations of landlords had allowed to accumulate and made no effort to remove. The garden was peopled by tall Sovanjan and Mango trees and a Vilva tree giving a sombre aspect to the place. At the back part was a pond which had become overgrown with moss and was the breeding place of mosquitos. The whole place was weird.

"There were many thrilling tales current concerning dark deeds which, it is said had been perpetrated in this house and compound, but this was long ago, and besides, the Sanyasin disciples of Sri Ramakrishna had no fear of ghosts. The monks had chosen this dreary retreat not only because of its cheapness, but especially because it was adjacent to the Baranagore burning ghat where the body of the Master had been consigned to the flames. They desired to be near the sacred river also as their Master always did and the Baranagore Monastery was but a few minutes walk from the Ganges. Here the monks were glad to live away from the turmoil of city life in the solitude where few cared to interrupt their days of meditation". It was to this dreary, desolate place that Tulasicharan came. At home there was bitter weeping. The inmates, males as well as females, went to the Math to persuade Tulasi to return home. They wept before him and prayed to him to come away from that haunted house. It was all in vain. Many a time did they go and try all possible means to bring him back. Every time they returned weeping. At last they implored him to visit them once a week. He refused to do that also. But such was their love for him that they used occasionally to go to Baranagore, about 3 miles from their house.

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And they did not go empty handed. It was after the lapse of two years that one day he appeared before them in their house. By then, he had become a Sanyasin with gerua cloth and long hair and uncut beard. He spoke to them affectionately and advised them to lead noble lives. They gave up all hopes of his rejoining them, but requested him to give them 'darshan' once in a way. He consoled them saying that he would not only see them, but would mix with them as of old, although only as befitting a sanyasin. He only wanted that they should not interfere with his way of life. He told them that he was about to start on a long pilgrimage and on taking leave of them accepted two blankets from them. The offer of clothes and other things was gently declined.

The other members of the Monastery were not all strangers to them. Some of them had assembled in their house many a time and passing many happy hours there, had endeared themselves to them and had partaken of their hospitality. They were sorry at heart to see the hard life of these young men accustomed, till then, to comforts and luxuries. And what sort of a life they now led! Rice, with or without salt, and boiled Neem or Nimba leaves was the food upon which they subsisted. Sometimes they could not procure even these. Then they would shut the door and spend day and night in song and prayer. One piece of cloth and two pieces of loin-cloth were all that any could boast of in the way of clothing. But what did it matter? They were indifferent to everything except the thoughts of their Master and the realisation, by self effort, of what he had pointed out to them. Said the leader once: "we were carried on by a strong tide of religious practices and meditation. O! the days that we passed! Demons even would have run away at the sight of such austerities. What to speak of men!"

A few months passed in this way. During the latter part of December 1886, the members of the Baranagore

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Monastery went to Antpur at the invitation of Baburam's (Swami Premananda's) mother. Here Norendra gathered all the young disciples of the Master, and in the fervour of spiritual enthusiasm which was evoked there, the bond of fellowship among them was distinctly sealed. Before returning to the Monastery they all went on pilgrimage to the famous temple of Tarakeswar Siva where they offered worship to the Lord of Monks.

In spirit they were all monks of the highest order. But they had not taken formal sanyas. M.—says in the 2nd Volume of the Kathamritha (7th edition, page 268) that Sri Ramakrishna did not give formal sanyas to any one and that the devotees called themselves by their old names Dutt, Ghose, Ganguli, etc., and continued their studies living in their homes as before, for sometime after the passing away of the Master. "Sri Ramakrishna did not give formal Sanyas to any of his disciples. Formalism and calculation were not in his nature. He moved wholly by the impulsion of the Divine Mother's Will. * * * He gave the first initiation to his boys, thus laying the foundation of their spiritual life, but he left the second to be given by 'Noren' who became the leader of the group after the Master was gone (Sri Ramakrishna and His Disciples by Sister Devamata, page 98). When the Sanyas was actually given and in what order to the various monks is not definitely known. In Swami Sishya Samvada (Part I, p. 99) of Saratchandra Chakravarty, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, it is stated "We have heard that after the Mahasamadhi of Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji (Vivekananda) collected all the passages in the Upanishads dealing with the rules for taking Sanyas and took Sanyas with his gurubhais according to Vedic rites before a picture of Sri Ramakrishna." The Bengali Book 'Kali-Tapaswi' (Life of Swami Abhedananda, published by the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, Calcutta) gives the following version (pages 38—40): "Gradually Norendra brought to the Mutt (Baranagore) Sarat, Rakhal, Baburam, Niranjan, Gangadhar, Subodh, Hari, Tulasi, Sarad and others * * * * . One day Noren

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wanted to take Sanyas with his gurubhais according to Vedic rites. Kali made arrangements for performing the Viraja Homa according to the Shastras, and placing the sandals of the Guru (Sri Ramakrishna) in front, officiated as the director, and Noren, Kali, Sasi, Sarat, Rakhal, Baburam, Niranjan, etc., performed the ceremony. Noren called himself Vividishananda and gave names to the others according to their characteristics. * * * Tarak did not join in the above homa. When Jogin and Latu returned from Brindavan, Kali made them perform the Homa and take Sanyas. A few days after, Hari and Tulasi took Sanyas in the above manner." Vaikuntanath Sanyal, a direct disciple of the Master has stated that Norendra took Sanyas himself and gave Sanyas to Brahmananda, Ramakrishnananda, Abhedananda, Adbhutananda, Nirmalananda, Turiyananda * * * and others by performing jag-yajna (sacrificial fire) before the picture and relics of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. All these took sanyas on the same day."

In a conversation at Benares Swami Nirmalanandaji stated " One day Swamiji (Vivekananda) selected the Mantras necessary for taking Sanyas from Mahanirvana Tantra and gave Sanyas to all of us. Sarat, Sasi, Kali, Latu, Gopal senior, Maharaj and Baburam—all of us received Sanyas from Swami Vivekananda. Later on Mahapurushji, Vijnanananandaji, Niranjanananandaji and Trigunateetaji took Sanyas themselves in the shrine of Sri Ramakrishna. Swamiji gave us the Sanyas names."

So, Noren who became Vividishananda himself gave Sanyas to his gurubhais and gave them appropriate names. To Tulasicharan Dutt, he gave the name Nirmalananda 'on account of the rare purity of his character,' so wrote Swami Ramakrishnanandaji.

Rare purity of character and the resultant strength and fearlessness were the outstanding characteristics of Swami Nirmalanandaji from his earliest to his last days.

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It has been said "Baranagore is synonymous with spiritual Sadhana." "Indeed, those were memorable days at the Baranagore Mutt. In the reading of the story, one is brought back, as it were to the time of St. Francis of Assisi and his disciples. It was all burning ecstacy and tremendous asceticism. It was the rekindling and requickening of the great spiritual flame which burned at Dakshineswar as the effulgent enlightenment of many souls. Poverty and blessedness intermingled in a strange beauty and loveliness and it was true of the monks that they lived not by bread alone * * Indeed the very atmosphere of the monastery was vibrant with spiritual consciousness. It seemed, as if even the trees, the grass, the birds and the lights of day and the shadows of night had taken up the threnody of their burning renunciation and Vairagya. The world had no meaning for the monks. They had brought the highest freedom of the highest spheres down to the earthly plane. They were aware only of God; and in those days there was lighted a certain fire which nothing has as yet extinguished; nor can it ever be extinguished because it is the fire of the spirit; and it has swept with hurricane force across the land, spreading the gospel of Ramakrishna. And the monks were like so many leaping tongues of that Fire, and the most soaring flame was the soul of the chief disciple of the Master * * But in truth there was no distinction made as one being greater or lesser than another. They were all equally inhabitants of another world than this,—the world of the monastic consciousness. All laboured side by side in performing the duties of the monastery, and of all, in this respect, Swami Ramakrishnananda was the head and heart," and his right hand was Swami Nirmalananda. The Memoirs of Swami Shivanandaji by Mahendranath Dutt, brother of Swami Vivekananda, describes him thus (page 123—126):-"He was young, lean, strong in body, most sweet in speach and always cheerful. He was also an untiring worker. He was, as it were the right hand of Swami Ramakrishnananda. Whether in cleaning

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utensils or bringing water from the tank or in any other work, Swami Nirmalananda was the first and foremost. For a long time he used to prepare *roti* at night. This preparing of *roti* was a delightful affair. Two or three (monks) would grind the flour and mix it with water. He would sit on a kerosine oil tin and prepare the *roti* one by one and serve it hot to others * * Swamis Ramakrishnanandaji and Nirmalanandaji were the strenuous workers in the Alambazar Mutt also. Everything was under their supervision. During all these years, Swami Nirmalanandaji's life, though hard and strenuous from one point of view, was happy from another point. This was, in a way, the highest period in his early life. He used to do Japa and Dhyana on the one hand, and on the other pursue his studies whenever he got leisure. He was also devoted to work. When necessary he used to sweep and cleanse the whole house and also go to the bazaar and purchase the necessary articles and bring them himself to the Mutt in a basket hanging from his shoulders. He used to cleanse the utensils also. Of course, others would help him. The picture of that wonderful period of Swami Nirmalanandaji's life is still before my eyes. There was a tank near the back-side of the house. Swami Nirmalanandaji used to carry one pot of water on his shoulders and another in his hand and walk down the stairs and then go up to the latrine on the terraced upstairs and cleanse that. (I make my pranam, I make my pranam, I make my pranams to him.) He used also to fill the big earthen pots with water. This continuous work produced a scar on his left shoulder. Along with all this he used to attend to the kitchen work. Further, he would tend the sick. There was not the least feeling of hardship or tiresomeness. He was always cheerful and smiling. In truth, Swami Nirmalananda gave his heart's blood for the work and progress of the Baranagore and Alambazar Mutts."

How the writer of the above memoir was impressed by the Swami at first sight is described by him in his

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book. "The Incidents in the Life of Swami Vivekananda." (Part I, pages 200 and 201.) "One hot day in 1887 the present writer went to Baranagore Mutt to see Norendranath. Norendranath had gone to the house of Nabhoy Chaitanya at Konnagar on the banks of the Ganges. The old Nabhoy used to go to Sri Ramakrishna and was doing Sadhana in a hut in Konnagar. So, Norendranath made frequent visits to that old Nabhoy. The present writer saw that a youth of about 20 or 22 years whose body though lean was strong on account of the practice of physical exercise, with shining eyes and piercing, clear and commanding tone and words, was then at the Mutt. Swamis Shivananda and Saradananda were also there at the time. When the youth was asked to go and bring Norendranath, he ran at once and went by boat to Konnagar. Both returned at nightfall. This was the first meeting of the present writer with Swami Nirmalanandaji."

Again in Part II of the same work the author repeats his impressions and feelings and adds "when the Alambazar Math was started, Swami Nirmalanandaji was considered one of the leaders there. * * He did everything as the helpmate of Swami Ramakrishnanandaji. He himself used to cleanse the latrine and bring water from the tank, one big pot on his left shoulder and another in his right hand and fill the vessels that were placed in front of the latrine. He himself did the shopping. He used to do everything with all his heart and soul. And whenever he got a little respite from work, he would devote himself to his studies. Sadhana and Bhajana were also pursued with great zeal. He was always cheerful, humble and sweet in speech. His allsided power began to manifest itself during this period. He would serve and satisfy all. That has been his nature always. His love and kindness towards all was unlimited. To cite one instance: In 1899, on one of the hottest days in May or June all of us went to bathe in Lochanghose's ghat. Engrossed in conversation, it was late in the noon when we returned. The

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road was sandy and burning. All were bare-footed. The heat was intolerable. Everyone felt his feet burning. The feet of the present writer got swelled and blistered as we neared the east of the bazaar. Swami Nirmalanandaji was also bare-footed. But he took up the present writer on his shoulders and conveyed him to the Mutt, not minding the trouble and his own feet. There are very many such instances in his life. * * In learning and scholarship also his reputation was established. He had studied carefully the different Shastras in Sanskrit and was a specialist in Sanskrit grammer. He could talk as freely in Sanskrit as in Bengali and Hindi. He used to teach Vedanta, Vyakarana and other Shastras to the new members in the Mutt. One particular characteristic of his was that the places and things he used were kept scrupulously neat and clean. He was an expert cook and used to cook many dishes much better than professional cooks." During the course of a recent interview, the revered writer spoke as follows. "I am very glad to know that you have preserved the remains of Swami Nirmalanandaji in a memorial temple. I am also very happy to hear that you are going to publish a life of that great soul. We are related in many ways although we do not belong to the same family. He was a noble soul and I am indebted to him in many ways. Please express my respectful pranams and also gratefulness in every line of the book. Baranagore and Alambazar Mutts were established by his sweat-nay-by the drops of his life-blood. Financially and physically he used to serve those institutions in an unimaginable way. Those old faces who have seen and known those facts—all have passed away. I am also dying. He did not want to enjoy anything for himself. He only wanted to serve others. I request you to quote whatever I have mentioned about him in my books "Swamijir Jeevanerghatanavali" and "Mahapurusher Anudhyana." Please express my respectful pranams in the book."

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When Sj. Rajagopal Naidu, a devotee from Bangalore, visited the birth place of Swami Vivekananda in 1911 he met Sj. Mahendranath Dutt. He went on talking with the devotee for about an hour and all the while he talked about Swami Nirmalanandajis greatness only. In the course of the conversation he said: "You are fortunate in having the great Swami in your midst. He is a moon amidst stars. He is such a *tyagi* that he would give away even his 'Koupina' if others are in need."

The Swami Vivekananda himself once pointed to him as an ideal Sanyasin. "Look at Tulasi," he said, "a sadhu should be like him. He has got a very fine head, and a very strong body. He works indefatigably days and nights, he can also immerse himself in meditation for long hours. He can sing well and play on musical instruments. He can expound Shastras, hold conversations, give lectures and cook well. You should be all-round like him."

CHAPTER VI.

PARIVRAJAKA.

Thus growing and perfecting themselves in the glory of the soul, in holiness and ecstacy, these children of the spirit of Bharatavarsha felt even the spiritual atmosphere of Baranagore constricting. The world was calling out to them; all the holy places of this ancient land, were inviting them, the hoary Indian ideal of Sanyasa was urging them to leave their last moorings in the world, the monastery and the spiritual brotherhood and to let themselves adrift on the wide world under the canopy of heaven, to tear themselves away from all limitations, to become one with humanity, with life with the all and the unlimited. Responding to the call and following the urge the monks took to

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the larger life of the Parivrajaka. It was in 1888 that the Swami Nirmalanandaji first got out on his long pilgrimage.

Before setting out he who had now become established in the self was yet human to remember the loving souls who had prayed to him to give them darsan occasionally. Now he was taking a step which, for aught he knew, might deprive them of that solace for all time to come. He therefore went to them, told them of his intended pilgrimage and took leave of them, consoling them as best as he could.

He with Swami Abhedanandaji and others first followed the Holy Mother to Kamarpukur and Jayarambati and stayed there for a few days. Then with the blessings of the Holy Mother and accompanied by Swami Abhedanandaji he started to Haridwar, Rishikesh and other places. They had as their possession only their kashaya koupina, kashaya cloth and kamandalu. Reaching the Grand Trunk Road, they began their march bare-footed. They would not use shoes, shirts or coats, they would not touch coin, they would not sleep under a roof, they would live on Madhukari Bhiksha which they would beg at noon and from four or five houses only ; they would eat but once a day. This was their resolve and vow. Covering a distance of about 30 miles, they reached Ghazipur, where lived the sage Pavaharibaba. They held conversations with him. There they met an old friend of theirs, Hariprasanna Chatterji, a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. It was he who later became Swami Vijnanananda. He was then employed as an Engineer. He took them in his carriage and entertained them. Leaving the place they walked on and reached Kasi, Ayodhya and Lucknow in succession. At Lucknow, a Hindustani bhakta desired to give them the railway fare to Haridwar. They would not accept coin. He then purchased for them railway tickets to Haridwar

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and also gave them some food. After visiting Haridwar, they again went on foot to Rishikesh. It was during the days of their tapasya on the banks of the Ganges that they witnessed the soul-stirring spectacle which they narrated to Swami Vivekananda and to which he alluded in one of his lectures in America. A Mahatma who had realised his identity with Brahman was sitting on the opposite side of the Ganges repeating 'Shivoham Shivoham.' A tiger from the adjacent forest came down and sprang upon him. He was unaware that he was in the jaws of the tiger, but went on repeating Shivoham. The tiger marched away with his body, while all the time, the Mahatma's 'Shivoham, Shivoham' was reaching their ears. From Rishikesh they passed through the old rope bridge of Lakshman-jula and visited Uttara Kasi, Devaprayag and other places. Finally they reached Badarika. After doing tapasya there, they resolved to go to Gangotri through Kedarnath. The long route, the wild animals, the impassable snow, did not awe them. They went barefooted through the snow-capped mountains to Kedarnath. In a cave there, they practised hard tapasya. Thence they proceeded to Gomukhi and saw the sourse of the Ganges. From there they returned to Uttarakasi and through the impenetrable jungle tracts they reached Jamnotri. From there, through Dehra-Dun they returned to Rishikesh. There Swami Abhedananda fell ill. The Swami took him to Haridwar in a bullock carriage, purchased for him a ticket to Benares, saw him off and returned to Rishikesh. In this journey, Nityagopal, the maternal uncle of Tulasi, was a companion of the Swamis for some time. He had become a Sanyasin and was known as Jnanananda Avadhuta. It was while he was in Rishikesh that he met Swami Vevekananda and other gurubhais and they all spent a considerable time there, dwelling in a hut raised by their own hands and living on Madhukari Bhiksha. "Again the resolve to perform severe sadhanas came upon the Swami, (Vivekananda,) but as ill luck would

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have it, hardly had he proceeded with them for a few days then a severe illness frustrated all his intentions. One day the gurubhais went into the jungle to cut bamboos for the purpose of extending their huts, and returning, the Swami (Vivekananda) was suddenly attacked with high fever and diphtheria. He grew worse and worse until his brethren were in terror. One day his pulse sank lower and lower, and the life-blood turned, as it were, into perspiration. His body became cold, his pulse seemed to have stopped. Indeed, it appeared as though the leader's last moment had come. He lay unconscious on his rude bed composed of a couple of coarse blankets on the ground. His brothers, overwhelmed with grief and anxiety, were at a loss to know what to do. In those days no help could be found within a great distance. While they were thus in the utmost agony of mind, praying that his life be spared and theirs taken in its stead, they heard a faint rustling sound caused by a movement in the grasses outside. And before the entrance of the hut stood a sadhu. They invited him in, and when he heard the case he brought out from his wallet some honey and powdered *pichul*, and mixing them together, forced the medicine into the Swami's mouth. This seemed to be the one remedy, a god-send as it were.

"After a while the Swami opened his eyes and attempted to speak. One of the gurubhais (Swami Nirmalanandaji) put his ear near his mouth and heard him utter in a feeble almost inaudible voice, the words, "cheer up, my boys! I shall not die." Gradually he recovered and later he told his companions that in that unconscious state of his body, he had seen that he had a particular mission in the world which he must fulfil, and that until he had accomplished that mission he would have no rest. After he had recovered he made his way to Haridwar." The company broke up. Swami Nirmalanandaji remained at Rishikesh for some time more, growing, developing his powers and ascending the heights of spirituality.

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After a time he returned to the plains and formed one of the party of the Holy Mother when she was taken to Koilwar on the Sone river. Swamis Saradanandaji and Yoganandaji were also of the party. They with the Swami Nirmalanandaji returned to Baranagore while the Holy Mother stayed at Koilwar. Oft and on the monks would go out when the Parivrajaka mood seized them. Again they would come back to the Mutt, drawn thereto by the Presence which it enshrined and the great purpose which had to be accomplished by their organisation.

The monks had visitors also at times. Their own kith and kin of the previous ashrama, the householder disciples and devotees of the Master, and Pandits and scholars who came to argue and discuss with the monks. And what contributed most to their merriment was the visit of madmen " who considered us," said the Swami in fun " as their own brothers."

" Days passed on in Baranagore, every day making the atmosphere holier and the monks richer with the experiences gathered and narrated by the several monks in their pilgrimages and the realisations they had by their Tapasya. They drew inspiration, each from the other. But this first home, the nursery of the brotherhood " had to be abandoned, for the landlord thought of its rebuilding. There was one monk, however, Ramakrishnananda by name, who would not leave the ashes of their Master but vowed with rock-like determination to keep a roof overhead, come storm, come shine so to speak for them and his brothers, till they should all foregather in their worship room once more. He then with Nirmalananda removed to a house some distance away but still in the neighbourhood of Dakshineswar and the monastery which had previously been at Baranagore was now known as the Alambazar Mutt."

Life continued here as in Baranagore under the supervision of Swamis Ramakrishnanandaji and

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Nirmalanandaji. Nirmalanandaji had a room for himself in this Mutt. "Kali Tapaswi" had another. But from here again these two set out on another pilgrimage and visited many places. Now and then the brothers would separate to rejoin again in the Mutt or elsewhere. Those who had taken independent routes would be gladly surprised to meet one another in some unexpected places. Swami Nirmalanandaji never kept any diary or record of his travels or activities and he seldom spoke of them even to his disciples or devotees. The thread of the story of this period is, therefore, broken at many points and chronology becomes a matter of surmise. Published memoirs of his gurubhais make reference to him in many places. It is seen that once he was met by Swami Akhandanandaji at Brindavan and accompanied him to Atowa. There Akhandananda fell ill for a few days. Swami Nirmalanandaji nursed him. Then there came Swami Trigunateeta with whom Akhandananda went to Agra. Again at Jaipur they were met by the Swami Nirmalananda, who was this time accompanied by Swami Abhedananda. "At their pressing request I (Swami Akhandananda) returned to Alambazar to witness the Birthday festival of Sri Ramakrishna."

Mahendranath Dutt has recorded his experience that Swami Nirmalanandaji used to attend on the sick. One such instance may be cited. While at Alambazar Mutt an inmate of Balaram Babu's house was attacked with a virulent type of T. B. The Swami nursed him whole-heartedly. The patient passed away. The Swami caught the contagion and began to spit blood. Fearing that it may catch others and unwilling to give trouble to any other, he left the place immediately and went on up to Hingraj, one of the extreme ends of pilgrimages in the Himalayas. He returned in perfect health. During his long stay in the Himalayas the Raja of Chamba and his family became his devoted friends.

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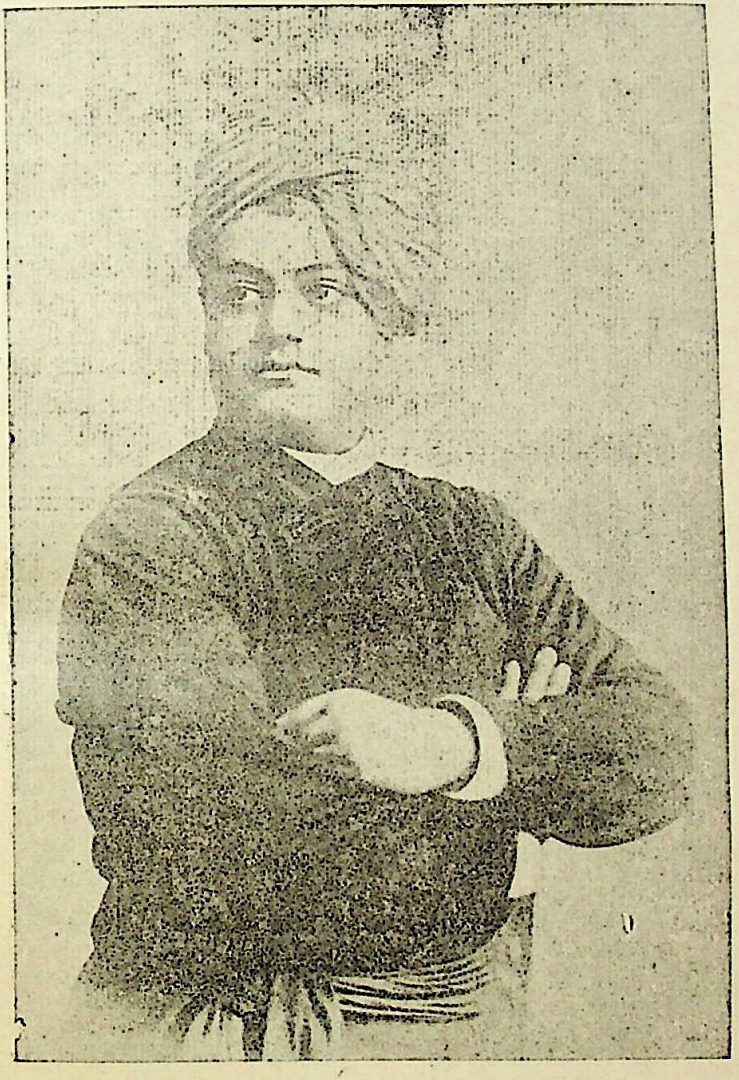

SRI SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

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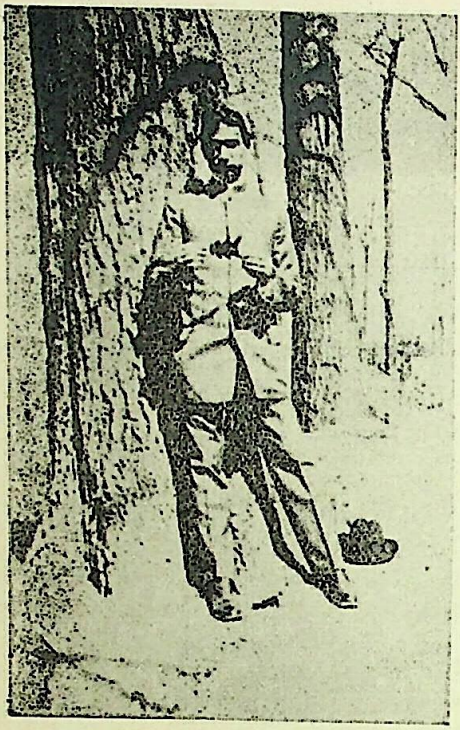
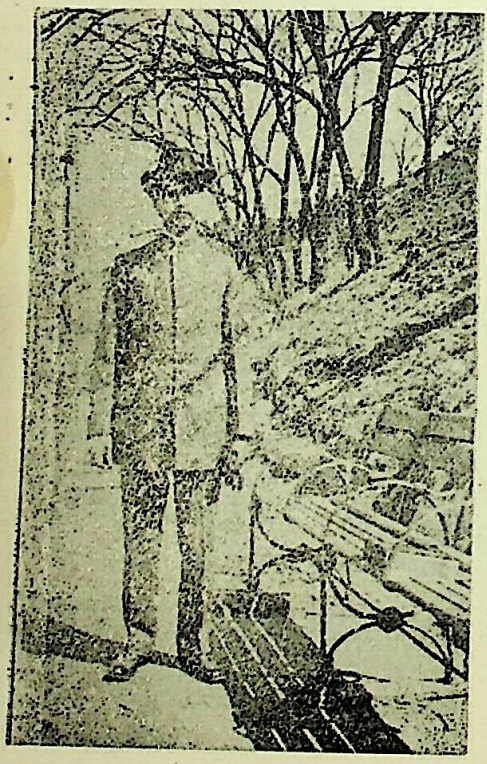


A group of some of
Sri Ramakrishna's disciples
Swami Nirmalananda Standing second from
right side.



SWAMI NIRMALANANDA IN AMERICA.

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Many and varied, interesting and instructive were his experiences in the Himalayas and elsewhere. As occasions arose he narrated some of them. Himself an ideal host, he spoke of the wonderful hospitality he had received at the hands of a host of monkeys in the Himalayas. In the sparsely populated parts of that father of mountains, hamlets are far removed from one another and the jungle paths from one to the other seldom trodden and hardly distinguishable. One after noon the Swami started from one hamlet to another. The sun set, it was dark, no hamlet or sign of human life was visible anywhere. Unable to proceed further, he sat down under a tree in that dense forest, in enveloping darkness. After a few minutes he saw that a huge monkey had leaped to the tree from somewhere. He had a stick in his hand. The Swami thought that the monkey meant mischief and intended to attack him. But very soon he disappeared. Shortly after he heard the chatter of many monkeys and noises that any how made the forest alive. The monkey reappeared, this time with a retinue and a lighted piece of wood. At a sign from the leader, some of the monkeys surrounded him in a distant circle, some brought twigs which were placed near the Swami to light a fire. The Swami caught their meaning; he knew that fire was a protection against wild animals in a forest. Fire was lighted, he felt sure that the monkeys not only meant no harm, but were warm friends. He wondered at it. But what exceeded even that feeling of wonder was the next act of hospitality. Again at a sign from the leader, a few of the retinue left and came back with some fruits. They were also placed before him. He did not take them, not knowing whether they were edible or not. Reading his mind, the great monkey came down, took one or two of the fruits and ate them himself before the Swami. He had no more doubts. It was the host's assurance and invitation to partake of them. The Swami thanked them heartily and silently and partook of what might

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undoubtedly have been regarded as Prasad. The monkeys surrounding him kept awake the whole night and dispersed at the break of dawn.

Once he could not come down to the plains before winter. He had to pass his days in a cave up the mountains along with some inhabitants of the place. Here the inmates stored all the necessaries for the winter months. For food they had no rice, but some flour and meat, not dried but raw or frozen. Animals were killed and then hung up. The meat would not rot on account of the snow and cold. Pieces from them would be cut up and cooked. For water they would bring a block of ice which would have fallen in front and around the caves to a depth of six or eight feet and heat it in the cave. On being asked why the animals were slaughtered so early, he explained that they could not feed them during those months.

Once he travelled in the Tibetan hills where no villege was come across for 3 days. He lived on fried solang mixed with currants that he got on his way.

Another time he passed about six months in a place living on ragi rotti alone without any vegetables or any curry or anything else to taste or eat.

His powers of endurance were tested to the extreme in several ways. Once reaching a sacred spot he observed Kshetropavasam (fasting at night and lying on the bare floor.) The cold was so intense that his legs were almost benumbed and became bluish in colour.

Enlargement of the thorax glands was another experience. It was after coming to the plains and seeing it reflected in water that he knew of it. It continued for about a year and subsided without any medical treatment. Blisters and swellings, cuts and bruises and bleeding from the feet on account of long continued walks was a matter of every day occurence.

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Sometimes he had to bandage the feet to place them on the ground. Illness of a serious nature too he had on a few occasions. A carbuncle on the head had to be operated on after he came down to the plains. The doctors in attendance were about to administer Chloroform. The Swami said that it was unnecessary, as he could stand the operation retaining his consciousness. Though they had misgivings, they yielded to Swamiji, but for his safety and the success of the operation they wanted his hands at least to be firmly held in position. Laughing, the Swami said, he would not be fettered and asked them to proceed with their own work. The Swami sat unmoved, not a muscle or nerve quivered and the operation was gone through successfully.

In the course of these journeys he met Hariprasanna Chatterji (Swami Vijnanananda) on several occasions. Every time the chief topic of their conversation was the Master, Renunciation and Realisation. The Swami again and again urged him to give up his work and enlist himself in the Master's service. During his visit to South India (Bangalore) the Swami Vijnanananda said to one of the devotees: "you do not know how much I am indebted to Tulasi Maharaj. We were classmates in the Bengali Tola High School, Benares. Not only that, Tulasi Maharaj alone knew the details of my visit to Gurumaharaj. While I was in service as an Executive Engineer, he used to frequent my place and stay with me for long. He used to inspire me and press me to give up that kind of life and to take up the cause of Sri Gurumaharaj. I was unmarried and I was thinking deeply of the course I was to take. When the thought was working within me, one day Sri Gurumaharaj appeared before me and asked me to give up that kind of life and to take up his banner. The next morning I wired my resignation, handed over charge to my subordinate, ran away to Alambazar Mutt and became a Sanyasin. That is our relation."

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CHAPTER VII.

PERFECTED.

Alambazar was the continuation and extension of Baranagore except for the absence of the leader. The Swami and the gurubhais were diving deeper into and soaring higher up the spiritual realms and their own selves, unfolding their potentialities and measuring their growing strength. They were gathering knowledge of men, manners, customs and habits which was to stand them in good stead when they went out as Acharyas of the world. The leader had left them before the Mutt was removed to Alambazar. The next year he sailed for America and at a single leap had become world-renowned as Swami Vivekananda. The monks were glad. They began to see the predictions of the Master coming true. They spoke of him, thought of him and his greatness, unconsciously raised them to greater heights consciously made them strive for greater perfection more perhaps to gladden his heart than for their own sake, more as tribute and service to the Master than for the sake of the world, the East or the West. Their mission in life, the great purpose for which they were born was perhaps yet unknown to them. But the Master's hand was shaping them and directing their course to that end. After the leader's success and renown they intensified their sadhana. All the knowledge, all the ideas which had been given them by the leader while he was with them were now seen against a new, broader and clearer back-ground and began to be more thoroughly assimilated. Unknown to them, undreamt of by them, a new world, a world larger than that of Japa, Dhyana and pilgrimages was opening itself to them. As it was, the Master's touch that opened their eyes to the old world, so it was the leader's touch that was to open them to the new. The touch came in 1897. Electrifying

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Bharatavarsha from Colombo to Almora the leader returned to the shrine which was then at Alambazar. For days together, it was simply ecstacy, the bliss of Brahman, unalloyed.

The Swami's duties now took a new turn. Service to the leader was now his special privilege and spiritual sadhana. From the very earliest times the Swami had endeared himself to the leader. His rare purity of character, his strength and manliness and his all-round dexterity had been noted, appreciated and dearly loved by him. And Tulasi had made Noren his Ideal even from his youth. All the gurubhais loved and respected Noren beyond measure and acknowledged him as their guardian appointed by the Master himself; they marvelled at his genius and his powers; they believed him a superman who in virtue of the power given by the Master had to fulfil a special mission in life. All this, they saw and believed. But in those days none saw more clearly or believed more firmly than Tulasi that Noren was Ramakrishna in another form. His special attachment and devotion to the leader was therefore, natural, spontaneous, and whole-hearted. And the leader's attachment to Tulasi was peculiar. He was a man after his own heart. They used to smoke together from the same hooka, they cut jokes at each other. Tulasi was also his unofficial Private secretary.

In later days the Swami delighted to describe himself as 'Swamiji's Butler.' That also was true to the very letter. The Swami was a cook of the very first order. His purity, neatness and cleanliness were unsurpassed. Often, therefore, he cooked for the leader who greatly relished his dishes. Once the leader was put on diet by the doctor. He was to take only a prescribed quantity of meat. That much was prepared and was served by the Swami. But the preparation had been so nice and tasty that the leader like a veritable child, said: 'Tulasi, just one piece more,

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won't you?' The leader was so persuasive that the Swami had not the heart to refuse him. He gave one more piece. When the leader had enjoyed it, like a born actor, he turned round and asked vehemently: "when the doctor has prescribed the diet, how could you violate it and over-feed me?" Nothing daunted the Swami retorted: "When he who has the universe under his thumb becomes a supplicant for a piece of meat who would refuse him?" There was hearty laughter over it. Another time the leader decided to go to Darjiling with nine or ten followers. At about 9 A.M., the leader informed his 'butler' that they would start at 10 A. M. To prepare meals for the great Swamiji and party of ten in an hour's time! The Swami was equal to the occasion. In a few minutes he had nine or ten stoves burning, in an hour he had a number of dishes well cooked and served.

It is no wonder that he had more freedom with the leader than many of his other gurubhais. It was he who with Swami Ramakrishnanandaji asked the leader to explain to them the meaning and significance of the Hamsamudra, the symbol of the Mission. It was he who requested him, all on a sudden and without any preparation to initiate Swami Suddhanandaji, the late President of the Mission. Swami Suddhanandaji himself speaks of it thus in his work "Swamijir Katha." "It was in April 1897 that I took refuge in the Alambazar Mutt. Of the Senior Sanyasins Swamis Premanandaji, Nirmalanandaji and Subodhanandaji alone were there at that time. Swamiji (Vivekananda) returned from Darjiling along with Swamis Brahmanandaji Yoganandaji and some disciples of Swamiji. One morning I was engaged in my room. Suddenly Tulasi Maharaj entered my room and asked me if I desired to take initiation from Swamiji. I replied in the affirmative. I had not taken initiation from any. Although I had read Swamiji's works I had not received any spiritual instruction from him nor did I try to get any, mainly because I dared not ask him for it.

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I was also under the impression that he would do whatever was beneficial to me since I had taken refuge at his feet. Moreover, I did not know how spiritual instruction was given. It was at such a period that Swami Nirmalanandaji invited me to take initiation. I therefore felt no hesitation. Straightway I followed him to the shrine. I had no information that Sj. Sarat Chandra Chakravarti was being initiated that day. I think I waited some time outside the shrine as the initiation had not been over. When Sj. Saratchanda came out, Swami Nirmalanandaji took me into the shrine and told Swamiji that I should be initiated. Swamiji asked me to sit down and after initiation spoke to me as to how I should lead my life in future." Such was his freedom with the leader and such was his heart. After the initiation of the two disciples Swamiji remarked to the Swami with evident delight, " Tulasi ! two sacrifices have been offered today."

He was not all the time a butler, he was also a pandit, scholar, a teacher of Brahmasutras and other Vedantic scriptures to the new inmates of the Math. With his great heart and well-fed intellect, he had a fund of fun also. A disciple of Swami Vivekananda was discussing the Vedantic scriptures with him. " When Swamiji himself came downstairs and addresing the disciple said " What were you discussing with Nirmalananda ? "

Disciple :—Sir, he is saying " the Brahman of the Vedanta is only known to you and your Swamiji. We on the contrary know 'Krishnasthu Bhagavan Swayam'- that Srikrishna is the Lord incarnate.

Swamiji :—What did you say ?

Disciple :—I said that the Atman is the one Truth, and that Krishna was merely a person who had realised this Atman. Swami Nirmalananda is at heart a believer in the Vedanta, but outwardly he takes up the dualist side of the arguments. His first idea seems

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to be to moot the personal aspect of the Iswara and then by a gradual process of reasoning to strengthen the foundations of the Vedanta. But as soon as he calls me a 'Vaishnava,' I forget his real intention and begin a heated discussion with him.

Swamiji:—He loves you and so enjoys the fun of teasing you. But why should you be upset by his words? You will also answer, "you, Sir, are an athiest, a believer of Nihility" (Complete works of Swami Vivekananda 1922, Part VII, page 188.) The Swami loved him and encouraged him to write notes of conversations with Swamiji. In the appendix to the 'Swami Sishya Samvada' in Bengali, the author who is the disciple referred to above says "It may be mentioned here that Sri Nirmalananda Swami of the Belur Math encouraged the disciple very much to write these notes of the conversations of Swamiji." The disciple expresses his gratitude to these two Mahapurushas—Master Mahasaya and Swami Nirmalanandaji.

To be with the leader was to be educated, enlightened and uplifted. In those days it was particularly so. He was, so to say, re-shaping them to work out his mission. He was making them also torch-bearers of the Religion Universal. The need of the day, he said to them, was "to create a new order of Sanyasins in India, who would fling away their own mukti and would go to hell, if needed, in order to be of help and service to others." The idea was quite new, too revolutionary and staggering. Not all could readily fall in with it. But Tulasi was one of those who could and did readily accept it. Knowing him to be a brilliant conversationalist, the leader desired to bring him out as a lecturer also. And this was how he effected it. While he was in Calcutta, he had been invited by an association to deliver a lecture and he had accepted the invitation. On the appointed day, however, the leader asked Tulasi to represent him

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and to deliver the lecture as he himself was indisposed. The Swami pleaded inability and said he would not go. "Well, then I shall neither eat nor drink anything," said the leader and he refused to take anything when Tulasi set his breakfast before him. 'If he had ordered me to get away for disobedience, I would have gone out' said the Swami afterwards, 'but I could not bear the idea of his fasting. I would have done anything to make him eat and so I agreed to go and deliver a lecture. He was so glad." The Swami went to the Association and began by saying that he was not a lecturer, as they all knew, but had gone to speak to them a few words at the bidding of the Swamiji who was indisposed and regretted his inability to speak to them himself. When he ended he had given them a very good lecture. He had proved himself a forcible and fluent speaker. The report of his lecture was immediately carried to the leader even before the Swami returned to him. He was immeasurably pleased. He patted Tulasi on the back and said "Well done, Tulasi, I knew, the power is in you." 'That was his way of training' said the Swami to his hearers.

In February, 1898, the Math was transferred from Alambazar to Nilambar Mukerjee's garden house. Here "the days of old in Baranagore were often times lived over again. The same old fire was present, the same intellectual brilliance shone forth, the same spiritual fervour was always uppermost." Song and Sankirtan, reading and study, Japam and meditation mingled with philosophical discussions, question-classes in which the leader would invite the members to raise philosophical doubts and he would give illuminating solutions of the problems at issue. The Swami shone at these discussions and it was admitted on all hands that, next to the leader, the Swami was the best in giving ready, lucid and fitting answers to all sorts of questions. In this connection it may be interesting to cite the words of Jnana Maharaj of Belur Math, a

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disciple of Swami Vivekananda: "I know Tulasi Maharaj and I have associated with him for a very long time in those old days. He had a very strong body and mind. He was very healthy in those days. He used to take exercise and teach others to do so. He used to play on the 'Dugi Tabla' and also 'Pakhuaj' generally whenever Swami Vivekananda used to sing. He knew how to play these instruments pretty well although he was not an expert. Swami Vivekananda was very friendly with him and used to like him very much. Swami Vivekananda used to complain to Tulasi Maharaj if any of us committed any mistake. Tulasi Maharaj used to play with Swamiji and also with us. We used to play All-today, Hudududu, Football, Badminton, etc. Swami Vivekananda could not play with us always, as he used to do, due to his bad health, but his presence was an encouragement for us. Tulasi Maharaj used to work with us in the gardens and fields. He was very hardy and knew the secret of work and how to work. He never tried to please or satisfy others. He was top to bottom an upright man. He liked frank and upright men. He was very loving and at the same time very strict. In the Mutt and outside he used to mix with select friends only who were of his type. We have attended his classes in the Mutt and outside. His explanations of high and hard philosophies were so very clear and easy to understand. He was a specialist in conversation classes. His question and answer class was unique. Any question put to him used to be taken in a way quite different from that of ordinary people and would be answered in an unexpected way so as to convince and silence the questioner. He would cut jokes with us and also with Swamiji. He used to encourage us in singing and dancing, but never joined us in dancing. He knew how to sing well and liked music. But, I do not remember any occasion when he joined us in singing. He was very neat and clean and his nature was very sweet, but some, inspite of the sweetness, take it as bitter on account of his

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uprightness. When he returned from America he was found healthier and stronger. He used to perform worship in the shrine here in those days, but not always. He managed the Math here for some time. If he found anything against his liking he used to express his frank views and dissociate from that. He was very frank. Some of us used to like and love him much. He made long pilgrimages."

It was while the Math was in Nilambar Mukherjee's garden house that the leader boldly conceived and executed the idea of Brahminising the non-brahmin bhaktas by giving them the sacred thread and the Gayatri Mantra, an idea which the Swami often advocated in the south and carried out at Ottapalam in Malabar. It was here again that the unique and unprecedented ceremony of initiating at the chapel in the monastery Miss Margaret Noble, a foreign woman—a mlechha in orthodox Hindu eyes—into the order of Brahmacharya took place, according to Hindu Vedic rites. The consecration was momentous in many respects. Not less, perhaps even more momentous was the Holy Mothers receiving of European lady disciples in audience and of the most orthodox Brahmin woman's (Gopalarma's) eating and living with them. It was here again that the leader introduced plague-relief measures and said that he was prepared to sell the Math property to relieve the distress of thousands. From here again it was that for the consecration of the newly bought Math grounds at Belur, the great leader followed by his gurubhais, disciples and followers carried on his right shoulder the hallowed urn containing the sacred earthly remains of the Master to the new grounds and performed the solemn consecration ceremony. The Swami was one of the chief participators in these movements and ceremonies. He was an alert witness of the doings of the leader. Every word, every act, every idea of the leader was carefully noted, deeply studied, well digested and assimilated by the Swami. He became imbued with the leader's

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spirit. He became moulded in that pattern. He was transformed into a replica of the leader, the Swami Vivekananda. In the intellectual sphere of work in the Mutt, his main duty was to conduct, along with Swami Turiyanandaji, question classes and classes for the study of the Sanskrit language and of eastern and western philosophies. After the departure of Swami Turiyananda to Kathiawar and also to the West the work fell mainly on his shoulders. In the diary of Swami Saradananda it is stated that Swami Vivekananda returned from Calcutta to Belur Mutt with Swami Shivananda on 4th Feb. 1899 and that he asked Swami Nirmalananda to take charge of the Math. Two days after the Swami's assumption of charge from Swami Saradananda Swami Vivekananda sent Swamis Saradananda and Turiyananda to Guzerat and Kathiawar respectively to preach the message of the Master.

In 1899 the Swami went to Rajputana for famine relief work. That same year the leader sailed for the West a second time. He came back the next year incognito. He arrived at the Belur Mutt late at night on the 9th of December 1900. The inmates were at their meals when the gardener came running for the key of the gate as a Sahib had come! There was, of course, much excitement at the news. While they were speculating as to who the Sahib was and what his business might be, the Sahib himself rushed into their midst. In boyish fashion he had climbed over the gate, not waiting for the keys, for 'hearing the bell ring for supper he feared nothing might be left for him if he did not hasten.' What was their surprise and their joy at the discovery that the Sahib was none other than their unexpected leader, their Noren, their Swamiji! Immediately a seat was spread for him and he was served with a large helping of Khichri, the food for the night. He partook of it with great zest. The whole night passed in excitement, conversation and song and joy. One present on the occasion, Sj. Nareshchandra Ghosh of Balaram Mandir says: "The Swamis were talking

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and enjoying throughout the night. I then witnessed the love and affection between the Swamis. Swamis Vivekananda and Nirmalananda sat chit-chatting and smoking together. After talking for a very long time, Swami Vivekananda began to sing and Swami Nirmalananda assisted him by playing Pakhwaj".

On the 10th of February 1901 the Trustees of the Math held their first meeting in the presence of Swami Vivekananda at which Swami Saradananda and Swami Nirmalananda were unanimously made the Secretary and Assistant Secretary, respectively, of the Math and Mission. The Swami discharged this additional duty also with characteristic efficiency and thoroughness. Next year when the leader was perhaps at Mayavati, the Swami again retired to his favourite Himalayas for tapasya. Seeing that he was not returning even after a long time the Swami Vivekananda called him over to take up the work of preaching. Swami replied that he wanted to continue his life of tapasya. Swamiji wrote back: "There is no dearth of wandering Sanyasins in India. But I do not wish you to be one of them." A little after, one day, a telegram was put into his hands. He perhaps thought that it was an urgent call. But as he read it he was unnerved. It announced the most unexpected—the most unbearable—news, the Mahasamadhi of his brother, leader, refuge, his All-in-All. It was more than a severe shock. It was almost a death-blow. He fell ill immediately. His life hung in the balance. One night, however, he had a vision. His leader, his Siva, went to him, sat by his side on his bed. 'Tulasi,' he called him in his silver voice and endearing tone, 'Tulasi, you think I have left you! No, my boy, cheer up, I am always with you.' That comforted him and he recovered very soon. Then again without returning to the Math he proceeded to Kashmir where he had a serious attack of pneumonia. The then Dewan of Kashmir was Sj. Nilambar Mukherjee to whose garden it was that the Alambazar Math had been removed. His wife made

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arrangements for Swami's treatment and wrote to Swami Brahmadanda who immediately sent him ninety rupees by wire and wrote to him asking him to go to Calcutta, leaving Kashmir immediately as it was the cold season there. He came back.

After some months he was unanimously elected a trustee of the Math and Mission. But he did not accept the trust. He continued, however, attending to his work in the Math. Some time after his return from Kashmir Swami Abhedanandaji desired to have the Swami sent to America to help him in his work, which was growing day by day. Complying with the request and seeing his fitness, the President Maharaj sent him to America.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE NEW WORLD.

The Swami left Belur on the 13th of October 1903. He sailed from Bombay on the 15th, went by way of Naples and reached New York on Wednesday, the 25th of November. During the seven years that Swami Abhedanandaji was in charge in New York the work grew rapidly. It became many-sided and enormous. He could not cope with it alone. Moreover, he had calls from many other cities in America to deliver lectures and to establish Vedanta centres there. Europe also claimed his presence; for several months at a stretch he had to be away from America. To assist him in his work in New York and to take his place there, while he was away, was the function allotted to Swami Nirmalananda. Setting himself to work in his own masterly way, he won the esteem and affection of all who met him. Every one was confident that he would prove an invaluable addition to the work in that

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country.* More practical than the practical American he introduced the practice of daily meditation. He also organised a Sanscrit class. The earliest available report of his actual work was in connection with the annual memorial service in honour of Swami Vivekananda, held by the Society in January 1904. It has the following: "Swami Nirmalananda next read a paper, especially interesting to all who listened, because it gave many facts concerning Swami Vivekananda unknown to his American friends and described in a picturesque manner some of the events of the Swami's early life as a Sanyasin when he was preparing for the great mission later achieved by him." (P. B. IX 93). He also read some of Swami's (Vivekananda's) favourite passages from the Vedas. Winding up the day's proceedings Swami Abhedananda spoke of the value of the work of the Swami Nirmalananda and of the new impetus he had already given in certain directions. At the celebration of the Birthday of Sri Ramakrishna he led devotional exercise from half past three to five in the evening.

Soon after his arrival in New York he assumed, in a great measure, the direction of the Yoga class at the Society and left Swami Abhedananda free to accept invitations to lecture elsewhere. In 1904 "for the first time since the Society's establishment, there was no break in the work throughout the summer, as Swami Nirmalananda remained constant in charge and carried on the Yoga classes without interruption. This was a source of great help and satisfaction to the students who were unable to leave the city and still more to those who, residing elsewhere, were in New York only for short periods" (P. B. X, 16). It resulted in a "visible quickening of the community spirit among all the members, manifest in an increase of activity and enthusiasm on the part of every one".

Early in 1905 Swami Abhedananda was invited to Canada to deliver lectures. During his absence the

* The Prabuddha Bharata, Vol. IX, p. 34.

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Swami took the charge of the New York work. It was then that he "delivered his first Sunday lecture. The subject chosen by him was the 'Vedic conception of God' and the clearness and force of his thought as well as the ease and fluency with which it was expressed disproved conclusively the claim he had always made that he was not a public speaker". (P. B. X, 76.) Eminent Scientists also used to attend his classes. Professor Parker of New York was one such. He had the greatest admiration for Kapila. With great enthusiasm he would tell Swami: "What a wonderful man was your Kapila, Swami. In fact he was the father of science as well as of philosophy." In curse of time a new Vedanta Centre was established in Brooklyan. The Swami assumed the direction of that centre also. A room for the meetings of the Yoga classes was engaged in the building of the Historical Society and the work grew rapidly. He was always ready to give help and advice to all members and friends and to all seekers after Truth. All who came into contact with him felt themselves benefitted thereby. Besides holding Yoga classes, giving lectures and teaching Sanskrit, he also taught the Upanishads as he was doing at Belur. He also spoke to them of the life of his Master, of His children and of India in general. They listened to every word of his with "intense interest", writes the correspondent, "for, the Swami Nirmalananda seemed to transport us to India, so clearly and so earnestly he spoke." The impression which he made on his hearers, students and friends was so fast that time could not fade it. After thirty years' silence Mr. Charles F. Gray, A.I.E.E., writes to him for spiritual help. As he was ready to teach, so was he ready to learn. Once when a nurse brought him his diet, he said he did not *like* it. "You mean, Swamiji, you do not *care* for it" said the nurse. He caught the difference in the expression and thanked her for the correction.

The teacher of Vedanta wore no solemn mien ; the master of yoga had no mysterious air about him.

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SWAMI NIRMALANANDA.

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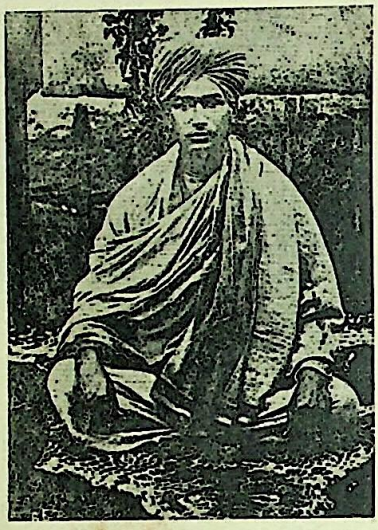

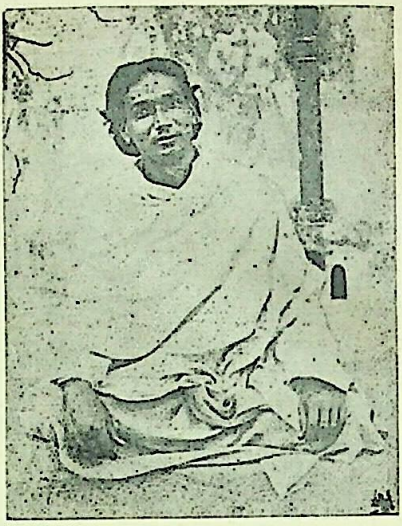

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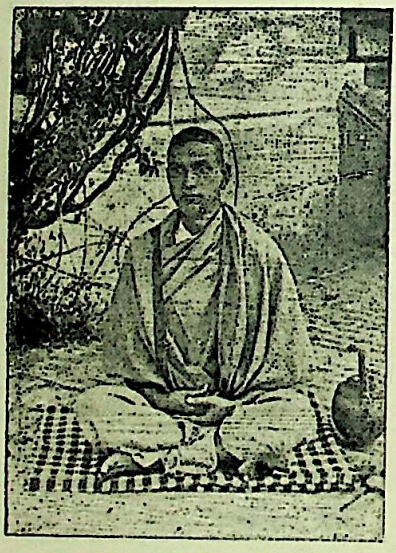

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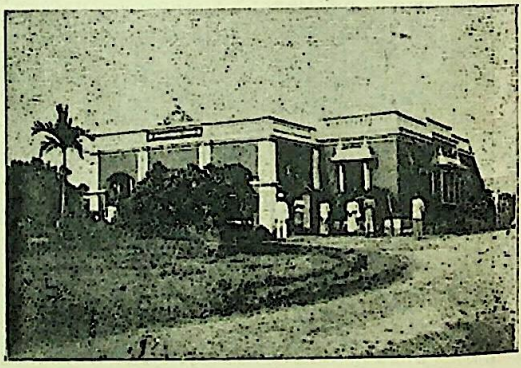

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA, BANGALORE.

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Simple and mirthful as a child, free and joyous as a school boy, he shed genial sunshine wherever he went. But deep beneath the plain exterior lay the austere ascetic and fiery monk. One glance of his pierced the thickest mask, and the cleverest fraud stood exposed. In New York there was a Psychic Research Society which called up and exhibited ghosts. The Swami was taken to it by some friends. Its proprietor was a lady, Miss Miller, who herself had a ghostlike face. She asked which ghost they wanted to see. The Swami said that he would like to see the ghost of a Red Indian. The host led him to a room where there was only a pale bluish light. A ghost appeared. All on a sudden the Swami, the dare-devil, as he described himself, sprang forward and caught hold of the ghost's hand and shook it heartily. Instead of being aerial and intangible it was as hard as iron. The Swami then led the ghost three times round the room. It had no power of locomotion by itself. The fraud was thus exposed. A Scientist friend who had accompanied the Swami wanted to see the ghost of a famous scientist. A ghost duly appeared. When asked about a well-known scientific formula, the ghost blushed. It was a clear case of false personation. Many such interesting experiences he had in America. He remained there for about three years working so whole-heartedly and giving so much satisfaction that his devotees, students and friends were very sorry to lose him. 'But,' in the words of Swami Ramakrishnananda, "urgent calls from his native land made him come back for the regeneration of his own mother land.'

CHAPTER IX.

BACK IN THE MOTHER LAND.

The Swami reached the mother-land healthier and stronger. Direct contact with the New World

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added to his experience of men and things, broadened his outlook on the world, enabled him to see for himself how true the words of the leader were concerning the immediate problems of the future and the part which India had to play in their solution and how slow the work was going to be, and it also made him fully conscious of his own powers.

On his return, he was given a fitting reception. The Anatha Bandhu Samiti, Salkia, Howrah, presented him with an address of welcome. Thanking them he said that he had not done anything special to deserve that honour at their hands. He had simply followed the footsteps of his guru, the Swami Vivekananda. He did what lay in his power to further the cause of the Universal Religion of Vedanta which is the backbone, the very life of India. He brought out that Jnana and Karma did not contradict, but complemented each other and he emphasised on the necessity for work. 'To serve Humanity is to serve God, for it is He who dwels within every soul, nay, every being in the Universe."

It will be noted that this first public utterance of his after his return contains the keynote of all his future activities. Spreading the gospel of the Vedanta, as interpreted by his Master and the Swami Vivekananda, and serving humanity as God were the objects for which he had dedicated his life. Faithfully and untiringly he worked for these ends unto his very last days. He knew no fatigue, he took no rest. He worked, his work was worship.

It is interesting to note that he, like his other gurubhais, regarded the Swami Vivekananda as his Guru. In an interview given to Swami Ramakrishnanandaji, H. H. the Maharaja of Mysore expressed that it was a rare privilege to greet a disciple of Swami Vivekananda in Swami Ramakrishnananda. Swami Ramakrishnanandaji said later on to a devotee that in a sense he was a disciple of Swami Vivekananda (Mysore and

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the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement, Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Number, published by Dr. P. Venkatarangam, page 5). His "Gurubhais looked upon him (Swami Vivekananda) as their leader, both because the Master had taught them to do so and because his personality unconsciously dominated every thought and desire of their inmost nature. Some of the monks even regarded him as the mouthpiece of the Master. Some thought that by obeying him they would please the Master himself, whilst others attached themselves to his person in a manner even as they had done to Sri Ramakrishna himself. * * It was all an unconscious growth and understanding, and as the days grew older, the more they came to understand him, the more they saw in him verily the spirit of the Master himself incarnate as it were". (Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western disciples, 1st Edition, Mayavati, Vol. II, page 12). It was the Swami Vivekananda who gave Sanyas to most of his gurubhais and it was largely due to him that they eventually gathered in a brotherhood and resolved to work as a new type of Sanyasins. To Swami Nirmalanandaji in particular the Master appeared in the form of Vivekananda (see the letter to Swami Madhavanandaji). The Swami did not consider him an Iswarakoti, but an Avatara—the Iswarakotis being Swamis Brahmananda, Premananda, Yogananda and Niranjanananda in whose memory he founded four Ashramas. Sri Guru Maharaj, he said was not an Avatara. He was the Mother herself.

After staying for some days in the Math at Belur, the Swami with Swami Premananda went to East Bengal and Assam for spreading the Master's ideas. He also visited Kashmir. Again the call came to him from his favourit " Mountain caves and glades of forest deep ". He obeyed it and spent some time in the Himalayas. Perhaps he was testing himself and proving that he was still an ascetic, that after long residence in the luxurious West, he could still live like a wandering Sanyasin, that he was still the unspoilt child of his Master. To take

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up Sanyasa is to give up, to forget the body idea. But that forgetfulness comes as the result of long years of hard and steady practice. The Swami must have now realised, once for all, that he was something far, far higher than the clump of earth which he was carrying as his instrument; his realisation must have been so real and deep that he could not henceforth identify himself with the body, even for a moment. He had become a real Master.

CHAPTER X.

BANGALORE.

Now came to him another call, that of his mother-land. Through the exertions of Swami Ramakrishnanandaji, a religious centre had been opened at Bangalore about the year 1904. An Ashrama had been built and opened there in 1909 (20—1—1909) by Swami Brahmanandaji. The charge of the centre had passed several hands in such quick succession that it became apparent that no permanent good could come out of it unless it was placed in very strong and capable hands. The President Maharaj had returned to Madras after opening the above Ashrama. In consultation with Swami Ramakrishnanandaji, he wrote to the Swami to come to the South and take charge of the Bangalore Ashrama. The letter reached him at Chamba. It may be interesting to state that while the Swami was at Chamba, he was seen by a fortune teller who predicted that the Swami would soon leave the place and go to the south. Although he knew nothing of South India, he described the place to which the Swami was destined to go. Swamiji was surprised to find that his description was accurate. On receipt of the letter the Swami came to Calcutta and went to pay his respects to the Holy Mother. With her blessings he came to Madras, and from there Sri Maharaj sent him to Bangalore along with Swami

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Ramakrishnanandaji. He took charge from Brahmachari Narayana Rao in April 1909 and set himself to work. His first lecture was in Hindi. It was much appreciated.

He began to hold classes for religious instructions in the Ashrama and in many parts of Bangalore, in the City, C. V. S. School, Cantonment, Ulsoor Vivekananda Ashrama and other places. At the Math he began to hold regular classes on Rajayoga on every Sunday. He had also to attend to the work in the kitchen. Linguistic, financial and other difficulties stood in the way of the Swami's getting a cook or assistant for long. He did all the work himself. Later on Swami Visuddhananda was sent to assist him. The Swami soon came to be widely known as a great scholar and a powerful speaker. Having an assistant in the Ashrama he was now free to accept invitations to visit distant places. In the month of May he was invited to preside over the Annual gathering of Sadhus (Sixth convention of the Sadhu Sangha Maha Sabha) at Kurukkudurai. He accepted the invitation and delivered his inaugural address in English on 'The general aspects of Hinduism'. The next morning, he addressed the large assemblage on 'Who is a Sadhu'. It was very interesting, as it pointed out the real characteristic of a Sadhu as distinguished from quacks and charlatans that pass for such. In the evening, he discoursed, in a very impressive manner, on Karma and Upasana. The next day, he delivered a lecture on the symbolism of the caste marks adopted by the different Hindu sects and explained the origin and significance of Tirunamam. In the evening the Swami lectured in English on the human soul. On the 4th day, the 2nd of June, he left for Madras and was given a hearty send off by the elite of the place.

He resumed his work in Bangalore on the 6th of June. His work here covered a period of over a quarter of a century and left a deep and lasting impression on the land and its people. Bangalore was the centre from which he radiated his wonderful influence in all directions. He took no credit, he claimed no originality for his work.

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He held himself as an instrument in the hands of Sri Guru Maharaj and the Swami Vivekananda. He spread their ideas, he followed their line of work and in his own person he demonstrated the truth and practicableness of their teachings. In all fields of activity he was a master. In religion as well as in seculâr work, he was a teacher, an example beyond compare. To begin with religion, his religious classes became a great attraction. He supplied as much food for the head and the heart as the students could digest. Almost all the high officials partook of it. Swami Srivasananda (then Mr. M. A. Narayana Iyengar, who retired from service as Deputy Commissioner), Messrs. N. Venkatesa Iyengar (Head of the Metereological Department), C. S. Balasundaram Iyer (Member of Council), Rao Sahib H. Chenniah (Judge), K. H. Ramaiya, (Registrar, Co-operative Societies,) B. Puttiah (Superintendent, Government Press), V. R. Kausik (Assistant Chief Electrical Engineer), V. Gopalaswami Iyengar (Registrar of University), M. Rajagopal Naidu (of the Survey Department), K. Narayanaswami Iyengar (Superintendent of Comptroller's Office), Devarao Shivaram (Managing Director of Maharaja's Mills), Rao Bahudur H. C. Javariah (Director of Horticulture), Appadurai Mudaliar (Director of Industries), K. Sankaranarayana Rao (High Court Judge), S. Venkatapathiah (Advocate), M. Ramachandra Rao Scindia (Merchant and Mill Owner), S. K. Narasimhiah (Merchant), S. N. Appanna Iyengar (Survey Superintendent), M. K. Govinda Pillay (Superintendent, Government Engineering School, Bangalore), and Murugesam Pillay were some of these. These and others who came out of curiosity not only remained his students but also became his devoted friends. The members of their families also became Swamiji's devotees. He was considered their family friend, guide and teacher. Family ceremonies used to be celebrated in the Ashrama itself. Many of them invariably went to the Ashrama for celebrating special occasions such as Birthday, Annaprasana, etc., in their families. Each devotee felt that the Swami's

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love for him was unequalled or unsurpassed. The devotees sought his advice and instruction on all family matters, they laid their troubles before him unreservedly. To them he was their best, noblest friend, who loved them without the slightest tinge of self. Not only on these, but on all devotees and, wherever he went, he exercised the same magnetic influence. Men, women and children, high and low of all castes, of diverse temparaments, felt the same attraction towards him. Many a devotee on being approached for information touching Swamiji's life said : " Oh, what do I know about him. He loved me, he gave me everything for nothing in return." Others said : " He simply conquered us by his love. We became his children." Whether in South India or in North India, this was the feeling about him.

Of the several devotees in Bangalore Mr. Narayana Iyengar (Swami Srivasananda) was, from the very first, the most devoted. He supported the Ashrama and lavishly spent for its upkeep and development. Mr. K. Narayanaswamy Iyengar became the Swami's personal Secretary and remained so to the very last. Mr. Rajagopal Naidu was a boy when the Swami went there. The Swami loved him very much, and he became practically an inmate of the Ashrama. Mr. Chenniah was deeply devoted to the Swami and remained steadfast throughout. These were some of the upper middle or high class devotees.

The lower middle class also came under his influence. The relationship to the Swami was as fast and near, if not nearer. Financially not so well off as the upper class gentlemen, these laboured for Swamiji and the cause indefatigably. They did not spare themselves. Mr. Venkataramanappa, Mr. Nanjappa, Mr. Pappanna, Mr. Siddappa and others spent Rs. three hundred for making a Ratham to instal the image of Bhagavan to be taken in procession during the Birthday and other festivals.

There was a third group which was the Swami's special object of love. It consisted of the socially lowest

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class—the Panchamas. On all festive occasions the Swami invited them personally, visiting them in their dwellings in dirty quarters! If any one of them was unable to turn up, the Swami would reserve and keep apart prasad for him and visit him again. One of them, P. Adimulam, would simply shed tears at the mere mention of Swamiji's name. Another, Madhuram Pillay, used to live in the Ashrama and serve the Swami in a number of ways. So did others whose names are too many to mention. His love could overlook faults, condone all mistakes, pardon all offences. But insincerity, hypocricy, he could not tolerate. Neither could he shut his eyes to the householders' spirit of domination over Sanyasins and Ashrama matters. Leave him free in his own sphere and he is your friend and Saviour. Try to interfere in his affairs or dominate over him, you are at once pushed out, however big or serviceable you are. That was the ideal of freedom logically worked out. 'Be free yourselves and give freedom to others. A place for every one, and every one in his place.'

If living the life is the best form of preaching and propagating ideas, the Swami was the best preacher and propagandist. His every little act, his every movement, his very being was profound preaching—but to those only who had the capacity to read that language and understand them. Such were of course, not many in number. The ordinary man wants articulate words, explanation of sacred texts, discussion and arguments. These also he gave in plenty.

He conducted regular classes bearing on all the different Yogas,—Jnana, Karma, Bhakti and Rajayogas. He delivered eloquent and impressive lectures, he held conversations and he had the Ramakrishna-literature translated and published in the local Vernacular, Kannada. For the illiterate masses who want more concrete things, there were regular worship and Bhajana and processions. The Birthday anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna and the Swami Vivekananda were celebrated on a very grand

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scale. Several Bhajana parties from different quarters of the city came to the celebration in large numbers and thousands of people were fed. One or more of the Bhajana parties went to the Ashrama every week and conducted Bhajana. All the important Hindu Religious festivals such as Navaratri, Shivaratri and the various Jayantis were all duly celebrated. All these went on on a progressive scale and thousants felt themselves blessed.

South India as a whole has long been in the grip of ritualism and taught the people not to give it undue importance. Don't-touchism had an even harder shell. None but a person of the Swami's spiritual power could have it broken to pieces in South India and that was a unique achievement. What a grand sight it was to see the highest and the lowest castes freely and publicly intermingling and interdining in the Ashrama on the days of the celebrations! Besides being a religious teacher of the highest order, he was also a radical social reformer without assuming the reformer's role.

Coming to matters which are generally considered secular he directed his energies firstly to the Ashrama itself. He wanted to make it self-supporting, strong and useful, beautiful and graceful. It had no independent means. Mr. M. A. Narayana Iyengar and, after him, other devotees contributed money for its upkeep. But contributions fell short of the actual needs. Swamiji had sometimes to cook his own meals and wash his own dishes. He did not consider it a bother and below his dignity, but such work took away much of his usefulness in other more important and vital matters. To be able to exert his influence far and wide, it was necessary that he should be relieved of such minor work. Funds should be collected. He took up the Sanyasin's begging bowl and collected about six or seven thousand rupees. Mr. Narayana Iyengar contributed about ten thousands. Mr. G. Venkataramaniah gave Rupees Three thousand and twenty-five acres of land. With the interest on these amounts deposited in Bank as a

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Permanent Fund and contributions and subscriptions from devotees, the Ashrama was at last able to meet all its ordinary expenses.

Along with the collection work, Swamiji turned his attention to the Ashrama site and compound which was then three and a half acres in extent. It was a part of a jungle overgrown with wild, thorny plants and trees. Swamiji had it cleared and with his own hands made a very beautiful garden with various flower plants and trees Gentlemen from the city and other parts used to come to the Ashrama specially for enjoying the sight of the beautiful garden. Rao Bahudur Javariah, Director of Horticulture, loved it very much and on several occasions had flower plants taken from the Ashrama to Lalbagh Flower Show. Mr. K. V. Anantaraman (Member of Council) and others used to visit the garden very often. Europeans too admired it. Swamiji was by nature a lover of art and beauty. He had not simply seen but studied the garden at Dakshineswar. He had examined and studied many gardens in America and other places also. In fact, he had almost mastered horticulture. And he had a pair of strong and skillful hands, a variety of useful and necessary implements. Additions were then made to the Ashrama building and new buildings also were put up. With these and the superb gardens the Ashrama looked beautiful and lovely. But the compound was too small for it. About 20 acres more of adjacent land were purchased, cleared and cultivated. Two wells were sunk, one for the Ashrama and the other for the use of the poor villagers closeby. An interesting incident in connection with the sinking of the well may be mentioned. Mr. Rajagopal Naidu was in need of some money. He could make it easily by selling bricks, if he could get the necessary materials. Swamiji advised him to dig a well and use the earth for making bricks, fuel for which was given by Swamiji gratis. On an auspicious day Mr. Naidu went to the spot and was preparing to make puja and find out the exact spot which promised water. The Swami went there casually.

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Being told of the nature of the proceedings he pointed out a spot and asked Mr. Rajagopal Naidu to dig there. Water was struck at a depth of about 25 feet. It was deepened further so that at all seasons of the year it has water to a depth of 25 feet. Over 500 people use it daily.

Besides extending and beautifying the Ashrama building and compound, the Swami had the Ashrama amply furnished with various utensils and furniture. Special mention has to be made of what was added at a later date (1930)—Coir mattress worth Rupees one thousand five hundred, sent to the Ashrama by Seth Khatawoo Khimjee of Alleppey, a great devotee of the Swami.

Over and above all these was the most important addition of a Library of about four thousand volumes bearing on religious and other subjects in Sanskrit, English, Hindi, Bengali and the South Indian languages. In short, what was a shrine in a jungle was transformed into an ideal Ashrama satisfying all modern needs and all temperaments.

CHAPTER XI.

INVITED TO KERALA.

The fame of Bangalore and the name of the Swami spread to Kerala. One day there came to the Swami a call from distant Haripad, a small, out of-the-way village in the southernmost State of Travancore. This is the State which owns and in which is situate the Holy Shrine of Kanyakumari—the southernmost Thirtha of Bharata-warsha. Sages, ascetics, pilgrims and devotees of all sects of Hindu hold the Thirtha dear to their hearts. They have poured their hearts' devotion there at the Mother's feet. They have had consolations and

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revelations from them. Dearer it has become to us of this age because of its association with the Prophet-Saint of Modern India,—Swami Vivekananda—because of the deep meditation and the vision he had there and the inspiration he drew from it.

One of the ancient rulers of the State, Kulasekhara Perumal, was a devotee of a rare type. He was a contemporary of Sri Krishna Chaitanya. They had met and embraced each other and wept together, taking the name of their Beloved Lord. This Dharmarajya (Land of Righteousness), the most orthodox, the most priest-ridden in India, the mother-land of Sankara has ever had great devotees in humble positions. And it is a strange fact that whenever there has been a religious revival in any part of India, Kerala has been stirred by it, has shared in it and contributed to its growth. It was so at the time of Chaitanya; it is so even now. There is some connection between Bengal and Kerala, deeper than what is apparent to the eye. That Parasurama peopled Kerala from Bengal may be a myth: nevertheless Bengal and Kerala have many features in common. Ever since the Swami Vivekananda woke up the note of Vedanta in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago,he has had ardent devotees and admiring listeners in Kerala. Swami Ramakrishnanandaji, at the invitation of Babu Kalipada Ghose, a great Grihastha disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, came to Trivandrum in 1904 and stayed for some months. He roused the latent spirituality of many by his inspiring talks, learned lectures, Gita classes and above all, by his unsurpassed devotion to Sri Guru Maharaj and supreme Nishta to the ideal. Religious associations had been formed in many places, Haripad being one among them. The members met regularly to study the words of Swami Vivekananda. Desiring to be further enlightened and inspired by the direct disciples of his Master, the Haripad Association requested the Swami to bless them by his presence at Haripad on the occasion of the Masters' Birthday celebration in

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February 1911. Mr. Padmanabhan Tampi, the President of the Association, had already met the Swami at Madras when Swami Ramakrishnananda had introduced him to Swami Nirmalananda and told Mr. Tampi that the Swami was a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and was mentioned in the Gospel as 'Tulasi.' The Swami readily consented to be present on the occasion. The association desired to present him with a welcome address. For particulars regarding the activities to be embodied in the address, the Secretary of the Association (the late Mr. Subba Raya Iyer, a Vakil) wrote to the Swami Ramakrishnanandaji at Madras. The latter replied, as follows :—

" My dear friend,

Many thanks for your kind letter. The Swami Nimalanandaji is a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna who took Sanyasa from Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda named him 'Nirmala' on account of his rare purity of character. He travelled far and wide all over India, spending most of his time in the Himalayas for a period of nearly 12 years. He made the Maharaja of Chamba one of his greatest admirers. Our President, the Swami Brahmanandaji, sent him over to America. Swami Nirmalananda worked so well in America that the people there did not like to leave him. But urgent calls from his native land made him come back to work for the regenertion of his own mother-land. He worked for some time in eastern Bengal and Assam. Then he was sent over to Bangalore whence you have invited him.

Yours affectionately,

RAMAKRISHNANANDA."

The Association sent him Rupees forty for the expenses of his journey. The Swami arrived at Ernakulam (The Railway terminus) on the 15th of the month. He was met by the Secretary and another

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member of the Association. They had expected the Swami to travel second class and to have an attendant. But to their surprise, the Swami stepped out of a third class compartment, he was alone, And they were more than surprised when he returned the unspent money to them. He was then escorted to Alleppey by steam boat. "There the vakils, Government officials, teachers and students of the Sanatana Dharmavidyalaya received him at the landing and took him to the Vidyalaya. A request being made to him then and there, he delivered a very eloquent and inspiring lecture on Bhakti. He dwelt on it under three heads, sakama bhakti in the beginning, developing into Nishkamabhakti and culminating in jnanamisra Bhakti or Parabhakti. From the time of landing at Alleppey to the moment of his departure from Haripad he was given strenuous work.

The next morning the Swami started for Haripad by country boat. At the landing he was received by a large party composed of the members of the Association, the Vakils of the local bar, the local officials and other gentlemen. He was presented with two addresses, one in Sanskrit and the other in English. Thanking them for the address the Swami said that "he viewed the addresses not as presented to his humble self, but as indicating their spirit of bhakti towards Sri Guru Maharaj." Swamiji, when speaking of his Guru, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, was chocked and actually burst into tears which moved the audience deeply (P. B. XVI 95). The following day was the day fixed for the anniversary celebration. The whole morning was spent in Bhajana at the local temple. After procession "the poor of all classes were fed to the number of nearly 2,500, three centres being specially set apart for feeding the Pulayas and other so-called unapproachables." (P. B. XVI 95). This was followed by a public meeting at which Swamiji delivered a soul-stirring speach on the 'Inherent strength of Hinduism.' Swamiji's address was translated to the audience, the

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majority of which did not know English "After the evening bhajana the Swami held a conversation which was full of life and spirit."

Next morning he gave a few words of advice to the students of the Shanmughavilasam School, discoursed on various spiritual topics, gave a lesson to the Association on Bhaghavadgita and held a meditation class. In the evening, he paid a visit to the S. V. High School where he addressed the students on their duties. After giving the members of the Association some valuable advice about the line of work to be followed by them, he took leave of them and returned to Bangalore via Quilon.

What deep and lasting impression he created in the hearts of some at his very first visit and how the course of their lives was permanently changed will be clear from a few interesting incidents. One among those present uttering the words "Nilakandha Bhakta makes his Pranama" leapt up to the Swami at one bound and fell down near him lost in devotion. The Swami took him up, saying "he is a Bhakta of Neelakandha, I am not worthy to accept his Pranama." Swamiji spoke highly of him and called him Bhakta, a name by which he was known afterwards till he took up Sanyasa. He became a Brahmacharin, got initiation from the President Maharaj and is now Swami Purushotamanandaji, living in the Vasishtaguha, Rishikesh.

Another devotee wept bitterly and Swamiji called him his 'weeping boy.' In his subsequent letters from Bangalore he used to ask the Association to take particular care of 'my weeping boy.' This devotee gave his property as a site for the first Ramakrishna Ashrama in Kerala. He lived as a Brahmacharin in that Ashrama, got initiation from Swami Brahmananda and became one of Swamiji's Sanyasin disciples. He is the Swami Chitsukhananda.

Mr. Subbaraya Iyer who was a Vakil desired the Swami to accept a donation of Rs. 1,000 for the

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Mission. Swamiji asked him to reserve it, as 'Haripad itself may have use for it.' That came in as the first donation for the Haripad Ashrama. It is clear that the Swami felt the atmosphere there as spiritual, and that it was going to have a shrine for Sri Guru Maharaj. When Sri Maharaj visited it, he spoke very highly of the spirituality of the place. Mr. Subbaraya iyer was then issueless and had given up all hopes of having any, but after getting Swamiji's blessings he became the father of three children. The first born was named by him Ramakrishna.

From Haripad Swamiji went to Quilon where he held a discourse. A visitor asked him why, in spite of his great efforts he had not succeeded in realisation. Swamiji said "A candidate may fail 6 times in the matriculation examination, in the 7th he may come out successful. This is the case in religion also." As a matter of fact the questioner had failed six times and passed the seventh time only in his matriculation. All marvelled at the reply.

At the time of parting, those present and those who had escorted him naturally wanted to make pranamas at the feet of the Swami. But before they realised what he was about to do, he fell prostrate before them all, quietly got into the Railway compartment and shut the door. He had made his mark in Kerala.

CHAPTER XII.

BANGALORE SANCTIFIED.
THE HOLY MOTHER'S VISIT.

Under Swamiji's fostering care, the Bangalore Ashrama had strength and beauty, dignity and usefulness added to it. But he wanted something more enduring, vivifying and holy. Early in the year 1911,

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SWAMI NIRMALANANDA AT HARIPAD
DURING HIS FIRST VISIT TO KERALA IN 1911.

FIRST VISIT OF SWAMIJI TO TRIVANDRUM.

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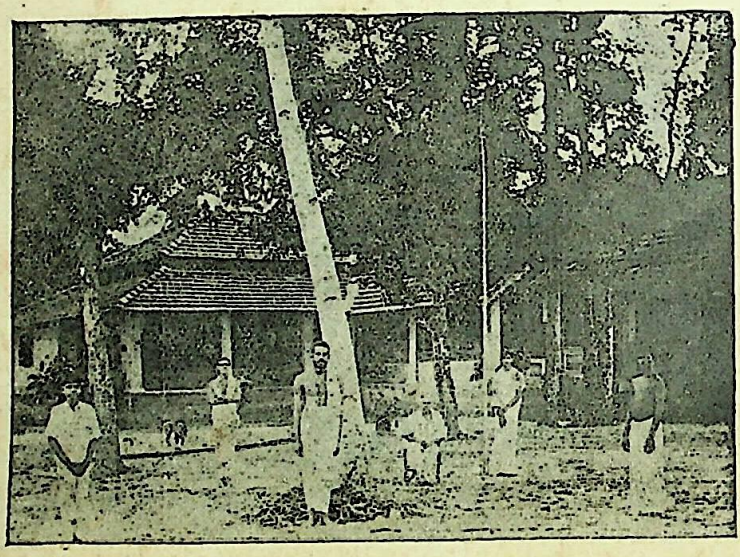

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA
HARIPAD

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the Holy Mother with a few women devotees of Sri Gurumaharaj started on a Pilgrimage to Rameswaram. Swami Atmanandaji, who was in charge of the Bangalore Ashrama during its construction and who had left it abruptly, accompanied her. He did not like to go to Bangalore again. It had therefore been agreed that the Holy Mother and party would not go there. The party reached Madras. Devotees from Bangalore—Messrs. Narayana Iyengar, Rajagopala Naidu and several others—went over to Madras with Swami Vishuddhananda, had darshan of the Mother and returned to Bangalore. They confirmed the news that the Mother would not visit Bangalore. Swamiji thought of the hundreds of devotees, men and women in Bangalore, who yearned for Mother's darshan but who could not afford to visit her in Madras or elsewhere. He was moved and said 'we must get the Holy Mother to bless Bangalore.' He left for Madras, stayed there for a couple of days and, in his own words "prayed to Her to bless Bangalore with the dust of Her Holy feet. She was gracious enough" to grant the prayer. Accordingly the Holy Mother with her party except Atmananda arrived at Bangalore on the morning of Friday the 24th of March 1911. The decorated route from the Railway Station to the Ashrama was literally packed with thousands upon thousands of people eager to have her darshan. The Swami escorted them to the Ashrama, on his head he carried the Holy Mother's box containing her Puja materials. The party stayed in the Ashrama for 4 days, unforgettable days of spiritual joy and fervor. There used to be a steady flow of devotees to and from the Ashrama. Those who had visited Madras and returned—Mr. and Mrs. Narayana Iyengar and their children Mr. Rajagopal Naidu and several others—were, at the Swami's instance, graciously blessed by the Mother with initiation at Bangalore. On the day of the Mother's return, all the devotees naturally felt intense sorrow. But none felt it more than Her own child, the Swami,

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who actually wept and wept for hours together in the presence of thousands. That lion among men was a veritable child before his Divine Mother. After the Mother left Bangalore, the Swami went up to Madras on the 1st of April to accompany her up to Calcutta.

CHAPTER XIII

TRIVANDRUM.

After his return from Calcutta, the Swami paid his second visit to Kerala in September of the same year. This time it was in response to the invitation of the Vedanta Society, Trivandrum, of which Dr. Raman Tampi was the President. This was his first visit to Trivandrum, the capital of the State, which, thereafter he visited at least once every year with wonderful results. Although he had left Kerala in March only, he was keeping regular correspondence with his friends over there, making enquiries of all and the progress of their activities. He did not lose touch with any of the vital elements in his work. Some of the members of the society who had invited him went to Quilon to meet him. From there they proceeded to Trivandrum by a country boat, the only available conveyance, the Railway to Trivandrum not having been opened then. The members were surprised to find that the Swami would accept no kind of personal service. He said he was not butter to melt at the slightest touch, and that he was strong enough to serve others. In the boat, he insisted on a light being kept up at night, 'dark thoughts, he said 'come in the dark.' He did not take any food that night, but smoked and referring to it remarked to his companions humorously, 'You are taking food in the material plane, while I am in the astral plane.' At the landing place in Trivandrum, he

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was given a royal reception and was taken in procession through the decorated streets. Replying to the address presented to him he said: "There is an American saying 'Love me, Love my dog.' It is your love to Sri Ramakrishna that makes you honour this dog of His."

Swamiji made a pretty long stay in Trivandrum. Dr. Krishna Pillai, an eminent physician, placed his spacious house at the disposal of Swamiji. The Doctor was a good Sanscrit scholar with a religious bent of mind and he and his family became staunch devotees of the Swami. He held conversations in the Native High School on almost all the days. He also delivered three lectures. For his lectures, he said, no chairman was necessary. Yet, following the ordinary practice, Presidents were proposed for the two lectures in the Jubilee Town Hall. The subjects were 'The General Ideals of Hinduism' and 'The Message of Sri Ramakrishna.' Usually he spoke again after the President's concluding speech, so that the audience may not go away with the misconception or wrong ideas emanating from the chairmen, usually tyros in religion, uncorrected. Referring to the unimpressive manner in which a well educated devotee made a speach on one of those occasions, the Swami remarked "You look for fine phrases and come prepared with manufactured, artificial rhetoric; it falls flat on the hearers, produces no effect. If you have some vital thing to give, phrases and proper words, will come of themselves on the spur of the moment. Style will mould itself as you proceed with your discourse. I had something tangible to give, by the grace of Sri Gurumaharaj and so I had no hesitation in speaking before Western audiences consisting often of the pick of the Society in their own language and they listened with all attention." He was also invited to the Cosmopolitan Club. The President remarked that the Swami must be a cosmopolitan, as he was a Vedantin who believed in the dictum 'Tat Twam Asi.' The Swami fully subscribed to the view that a Vedantin is a cosmopolitan.

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He then launched a powerful attack on the so-called cosmopolitan who only practised promiscuous eating and drinking. He also rated the so-called social reformers, who were pulling down and degrading the higher classes instead of elevating the lower ones by giving them proper education and culture. He spoke of the methods of Swami Vivekananda for the uplift of India. As a result of that talk the Vedanta Society began to hold night classes for the benefit of the poor.

In the Gita Class one day he took up the 12th chapter and spoke on the Swarat and Virat forms of the Lord and explained the meaning of Upasana as sitting near. 'Love', he said 'made one approach the beloved nearer and nearer. There is a rose-flower outside. We like it, we pluck it, smell it, place it near our hearts in the button-hole of our coat.' That was one of the illustrations he gave.

The next day when he was about to take the Gita one among the students desired some practical instructions in meditation. Swamiji was very pleased and began a meditation class which was regularly conducted during the remaining days of the Swami's stay there as well as on subsequent occasions.

In the early hours of the morning all would assemble in the room. After placing flowers and burning incense before the photos of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, Swamiji would sit in Yogic posture and teach others to sit straight. He would ask them to close their eyes, send a current of good thoughts to the whole world, pray for the happiness and well-being of all; then to salute all the Mahapurushas, Gurus, Gods and Avataras and to crave their blessings. Afterwards they were to imagine a lotus in the heart, full of light inside and outside, and to think of the Ishta-Devata as seated on it. The Devata should be thought of as a living reality. By sincere and steady practice, the Devata can be made to talk to the devotee, clearing all his doubts. One of

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his ardent devotees and students says : " Thus we were initiated in practical spirituality, and many count that as one of the greatest treasures laid open to us by the great love and mercy of Swamiji. He would often urge us to practise whole-heartedly and regularly, and encourage us by saying that we cannot now conceive of the immense benefit we would derive from it. On the first day of his teaching, he prostrated before all present, saying ' you are all the living temples of God.'

One present had bathed before he sat for meditation. Swamiji remarked : ' The leech always remains in water yet it is not regarded as holy ; what is wanted is purity of heart, and not mere external cleanliness.'

Another time he spoke on meditation as follows:— "There will be no great progress if you meditate for a short time only every day and spend all other time in wordly thoughts. The little time you thus devote every day will have to be spent in trying to remove the impressions which will have crowded into your minds at other times. And this is repeated every day. So to make real progress in meditation, a part of the mind should always be given to God, whatever be the work you are engaged in. If you are able to do that, your mind will get concentrated as soon as you sit down for meditation. The thought of God can be kept continuously under all conditions, by a little practice. Suppose you have a tooth-ache. Are you not able to attend to all your daily duties in spite of the continuous pain. Similarly by a little practice you will reach a state in which you cannot give up the thought of God even for a single moment.

It was during this, his first visit to Trivandrum that a plan for an Ashrama there was discussed. A subscription list was immediately opened. Swamiji in his clear and beautiful hand wrote on it ' Om Namo Bhagavate Ramakrishnaya ' in Nagari Character and headed the list with a subscription of Rupee One which

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he at once paid remarking humourously that he should not be born again for paying it. He was followed by Dr. Tampi and other friends with sums of three and four digits.

Some friends suggested to the Swami to pay a visit to the Maharaja. Swamiji demurred, but the friends urged it again and cited the examples of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ramakrishnananda. Swamiji reluctantly agreed to the suggestion and asked the friend who had proposed it, to draft a letter. It was done in the usual stereotyped form. 'As I desire to pay my respects to your Highness etc.' Swamiji turned round on him and said 'you do not know, what a Sanyasin should say. Though humble, he should not lower the ideal.' Forthwith he dictated 'I am a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. As I have come to your capital, I think I should convey to you my blessings in person, etc." The Maharaja was indisposed at that time and could not receive the Swamiji just then. Swamiji never cared to visit Royalty thereafter.

Hearing of the passing away of the Sister Nivedita, he became solemn for a moment and prayed 'May her soul rest in peace.' Someone asked him about her conversion to Hinduism. He said 'She was never converted. She was made a better Christian. The Ramakrishna Mission is not a proselytising body; it helps all to realise their highest ideals.'

It was quite a new type of man that the public of Trivandrum saw in their midst. He towered head and shoulders above them all in all respects; immeasurably, infinitely he was superior to the best and highest of them, yet how humble, how kind, how loving, how utterly devoid of self! He returns to them the unspent passage money which was his by all standards of right, he does not accept even big donations, he prostrates himself before them! A wonderful personality, a true son of Sri Ramakrishna, they say to themselves. They fix their gaze on him, they are captivated by him.

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It may be mentioned that a devoted group of disciples gathered round him during this first visit among whom were Mr. Rama Warriar, a constant supporter of the Ashrama, Mr. Nilakanta Pillay, Mr. Shivarama Pillay, Mr. Sankara Pillay and others who remained steadfast throughout.

Haripad was the stepping stone to Trivandrum. From Trivandrum he shook not Trivandrum only but all Travancore and all Kerala. The fire that he lighted there, the energy which he let loose there, the current which he there set in motion was not to be extinguished, not to be spent out, not to be stopped or obstructed.

Inwardly satisfied that the foundation was well and truly laid, the Swami set out to Kanyakumari to worship the Mother, 'to charge his battery,' as he expressed it, a practice which he adhered to on all occasions of his visit to Trivandrum. Kanyakumari seemed to have been, in fact, his spiritual destination whenever he went to the south. After worshipping the Mother and resting himself for a short time, he returned and touching Trivandrum proceeded to Thiruvella, the third centre in the State to invite him. On his way he got down at Varkalai, a health resort and a very sacred place of pilgrimage, famous in Upper India under the name of Janardhanam. There he was presented with an address of welcome in Sanskrit verse by the great Poet, the late Kumaran Asan, on behalf of the disciples of Sri Narayana Guru. Proceeding thence he went by way of Haripad from where he was escorted by the public of Thiruvella in a beautifully decorated 'Snake boat' and taken in procession to Thiruvella. At the request of the local public, the Swami laid the foundation stone of the Ramakrishna Mandiram on the 28th of October 1911. In the evening of the same day he presided over the annual meeting of the local Sri Ramakrishna Sangha held in the M. G. M. School Hall. After his brilliant presidential address, he held a conversation with the elite of the Town. Here he

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was the guest of Mr. M. R. Narayana Pillai who was then the local District Munsiff, with whom he was corresponding ever since his first visit to Haripad. After a short stay in the place the Swami left Travancore enroute to Bangalore.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FLAG HOISTED IN MALABAR.

Early next year (1912) the Swami was invited to Ootacamund in the Nilgiris to preside over the third anniversary of the Vivekananda Association, Kaity. He accepted the invitation and delivered a series of lectures and discourses between the 28th of April and the 1st of May. The subjects of his two lectures were 'Life of Swami Vivekananda as an ideal for Young India' and 'Reasons for the Study of Vedanta.' The third and the fourth days were devoted to answering questions put to him by the audience. "The Swamiji's answers to all of them were clear, definite and immensely instructive. In the end he explained the position of the Ramakrishna Mission in the field of philosophical work." (P. B. XVII 1912, p. 120.)

On the last day of his stay he paid a visit to the Gaekwar of Baroda who was then at his summer residence at Fernhill. The Gaekwar had wanted to see him a few years ago, somewhere in Central India. He could not meet him at that time. He thought he could visit him now if the Gaekwar was so inclined. He wrote to the Gaekwar, and receiving his reply went and saw him at the palace. The Gaekwar received him with sincere cordiality, talked with him for half an hour on various matters relating to the Ramakrishna Mission, and promised substantial help if the Mission would open a centre of work in his State.

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There was something specially providential in this visit to Ooty, for in the journey he casually met with a devotee of Ramakrishna (Mr. T. Kunhiraman Menon, Vakil, Parapanangadi), who introduced him to Malabar and Ottapalam. The story of that meeting which had far-reaching effects may best be told in his own words.

"It was in April 1912 that I met Srimat Swami Nirmalanandaji for the first time. It took place, one pleasant morning at the Mettupalayam Railway Station, and was quite casual. I was then keenly desirous of coming across a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna at some place or other. An extraordinarily powerful voice, the like of which I had not heard before, addressing the luggage clerk of the Station, attracted my attention; and, when I turned round and looked up I thought I saw a Malayali Sanyasin, between 45 and 50 years in age, retaining, yet, the exuberant energy of his manhood, soldierly in gait and scholarly in his English. Wondering who this personage might be, I accosted the younger of the two Malayali gentlemen who were accompanying him; and this younger fellow-passenger, who was no other than Bhakta Neelakandha (now Swami Purushothamanandaji) informed and corrected me, saying that it was the Swami Nirmalananda, a Bengali and a disciple of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. Swamiji was going to Ooty to preside over the anniversary function of a Vivekananda Society that was working there at that time. I was going to Fernhill, a mile this side of Ooty to remain there with a friend for a few days to recoup my health.

"Reaching Fernhill, I lost no time in taking my dinner and then started off to the little cottage on the edge of a beautiful valley which had been arranged by the members of the Vivekananda Society for Swamiji's temporary stay. I saw him alone at the gate of the cottage with a woollen wrapper round his body and a tobacco pipe in his mouth. We greeted each other and I introduced myself to him.

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"When I saw Swamiji quite close, I realised that the most remarkable feature of his physical person, next to his voice was his brilliant and penetrating eyes. It seemed as though they were looking into the very soul of the person before them and not at the outward human form. I also saw that the Swamiji was very muscular and strong in body. Thus his voice, eyes and body—all of which bespoke strength—gave me an impression of a mighty mind inside. The teachings of Swami Vivekananda that strength was religion, strength was virtue, strength was life, etc., had a great appeal to me. I was myself a strong, young man with an athletic and healthy body at that time. I thought that Swamiji was a perfect embodiment of that gospel of strength preached by his illustrious brother. Was not the gospel of Ramakrishna also a gospel of strength, sakti in essence? Our Swamiji in his person was a constant reminder of this gospel.

"In the course of his first talks with me he said that he had not stopped anywhere in British Malabar, and that he had no friends or acquaintance there. At once I invited him to the place where I was then practising—Badagara in North Malabar. Swamiji readily accepted the invitation and said he would be glad to come to my place in September—October that year, either on his way to or back from Travancore. After a brief pause he added that he felt as if Sri Guru Maharaj told him that something of His work could be done through me, in my part of Malabar. While demurring to that statement that something could be done through me, I assured him that whatever services I was capable of rendering to His cause would be ungrudgingly placed at his disposal.

"When I was about to depart Swamiji told me that the meeting at which he was to preside was coming off the next day and that if I could go to his cottage in time, all of us could go together in the carriage that would be arranged for him. I agreed

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and I arrived in time the next day. The carriage was ready, but there were six of us to be carried where there was room only for four. I offered to walk, but Swamiji would not allow it. He dragged me in and made me sit on his lap, in spite of my protest. Thus huddled together, we travelled a distance of about three miles. Swamiji was quite merry and laughing all the while.

"The meeting was largely attended. Swamiji made an eloquent and inspiring speech on the 'Life of Swami Vivekananda as an Ideal for Young India.' He stayed two more days at Ooty and we left the hills by the same train on the third day. I had thought of making a longer stay but having met Swamiji I could not forego the pleasure of travelling with him down the hills. Before leaving Fernhill, my host and relation who was the Station Master there, had given me a good quantity of boiled milk, sweetened with sugar, and some fruits to be offered to Swamiji on the way. It was English cow's milk. At Mettupalayam which was very hot, Swamiji felt thirsty and wanted a cup of coffee. But there was hardly time. Thinking that was the moment when the English cow's milk would be relished best by Swamiji, I took the vessel containing the milk and said "why coffee, Swamiji here is plenty of excellent milk boiled and sweetened. My host told me it is nice English cow's milk specially got for thee." So saying, I was about to offer a cup when he gave me such a stare of displeasure and disapproval as I would not forget all my life. The repetition and emphasis on the word 'English cow's milk' had evidently displeased him. I felt that like his world-renowned brother, the Swami Vivekananda, he was an out-and-out Indian patriot first, and next only a humanitarian. Without speaking a word, Swamiji softened down, and said: "You see, I do not drink milk by itself. When I feel awfully thirsty, a good cup of coffee relieves me.' At Podanur I got him the good coffee that he wanted. Then taking leave of him we

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(the two Travancore friends, Bhakta and Mr. M. R. Narayana Pillay and myself) made our salutations to him. He blessed us all and he asked me to write to him now and then.

"I went back to Badagara and told my friends that a real Swami, a disciple of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, would come to Badagara in a few months. They seemed enthusiastic over the coming events. Most of the English educated gentry of the place, Mr. Karunakara Menon, Sub-Registrar, in particular, had come to know something of the greatness of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda through some efforts made by me to scatter the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature among them. With their co-operation, it was easily decided that Swamiji's visit must be made a concern of the public of Badagara. A letter of invitation signed by a few of the leading gentlemen of Badagara representing the public was sent to him at Bangalore. He replied that he would be glad to visit Badagara on his way back from Travancore and wrote to me that he would let me know the date and time of his arrival some days ahead, after reaching Travancore."

It was not enough to make the Swami's visit a local affair. There was in Malabar a lot of activity and propaganda and exploitation—all of a morbid type—in the name of religion. Various persons of various parts, men and women, had set themselves up in various parts of the District as teachers of religion, distributing their blessings in person, or by post, in return for the monies the seekers were able to pay. There was, besides, the activity of an imported body having psycho-religious claims, greedy for a following and adhered to mostly by English educated members, among whom were some good, intelligent and influential gentlemen. These teachers and societies could never quench the real thirst of the souls struggling for the life-giving waters of the spirit. The ancient religion of the Vedanta as realised and vitalised by Sri Ramakrishna

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and as re-stated by Swami Vivekananda alone, could satisfy and was sure to appeal to the sincere seekers of truth, in this land of Sri Sankara. Here are worshippers of all forms of God :—Of Shiva, Vishnu, Shakti, Skanda, Ganesha and the supreme Brahman, of all forms of the personal as well as the Impersonal. Members of the same family, children of the same parents have different Ishtas. They view the differences as quite natural and inevitable and not only do they tolerate, but respect one another's faiths and Ishtas. The children of Kerala have gone further than that. They have gladly welcomed not only Buddhists and Jains, but also Jews, Christians and Muhammadans and helped them to build their respective churches and to propagate their faith. To them, therefore, the advent of an accredited messenger of Sri Ramakrishna was all the more welcome.

On the appointed day Swamiji came by train. He was alone. A large and distinguished gathering received him at the Station, garlanded him and took him in procession to the accompaniment of music and devotional songs to the local Theosophical Hall where he was presented with an address. He gave a brief but inspiring reply. Never before had Badagara given such a grand and whole-hearted reception to any visitor. Not only some of the leading gentry of the neighbourhood but also men of culture and influence from Tellicherry, Quilandy, Calicut and other places had assembled to welcome Swamiji. He was glad at the sensation created, for as he said, it meant enthusiasm in Bhagavan's name. Swamiji had a fellow passenger in the same compartment. He was a leading citizen and an influential member of a religious body. His face reflected a strong dislike for the Swamiji's visit. Swamiji noted it. He enquired of the identity of the gentleman and when told who and what he was, he laughed outright and shook his head as if to say that he understood what the gentleman's fears might be.

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The next day there was a conversazione when the assembly was larger than that of the previous evening. Many and various were the questions put. He was also asked about the Ramakrishna movement—its aims, objects, attitude towards other religions, methods of work and so on. Questions designed to elicit criticism on the suspicious and commercial methods of work of some other organisations were not omitted. Swamiji while he was guarded in his answers to the latter class of questions, was at his best in the exposition of the various subjects raised. The conversations lasted full four hours. The first interpreter, Mr. Kollangode Gopalan Nair, Pandit, got tired and Mr. Kunhiraman Menon had to take his place. Very little remained for the audience to know to be fully enlightened on the Ramakrishna Mission and on the fact that it was the foremost though youngest religious organisation in the land.

The remarks of two individuals of different types concerning the Swami whom they met for the first time and for a few moments at Badagara, are worth recording. They show how the plain and ordinary looking Swami impressed some of the discerning men at first sight. And they also show that in Kerala there were some who could instantaneously see something of his greatness, cleverly and deliberately concealed as it was. One of them, Mr. K. P. Krishnan Vaidyar,—a leading Medical Practitioner saw Swamiji at the Railway Station just for five minutes. He then observed: "I am incompetent to judge of the spiritual work of the Swami. But he appears to be a man of extraordinary capabilities. If the Viceroy of India were to vacate his place and the Swami were asked to take it up, he would at once do so without any hesitation." The other, Mr. K. P. Kurup, a Rajayogi, observed. "This is a great Yogi, but a Gupta Yogi. There is every sign of the Raja Rishi about him."

The next morning he started for Tellicherry on the invitation of Mr. Kannan Nambyar, a leading

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member of the local bar. There also a conversation was held, the audience putting many intelligent questions. Swamiji's answers were received with great satisfaction. The next day a messenger came from Calicut with a letter from Dewan Bahadur V. Rajagopalan Tampan of Kollangode, later District Superintendent of Police, who was then at Calicut, requesting Swamiji to visit Calicut. It was his father who had given the first Bhiksha to the Swami Vivekananda when he met him as a Parivrajaka at Shoranur. Swamiji was kind enough to accept that invitation.

There was an incident on the day previous to the Swamiji's departure from Tellicherry. A Tiyya young man of a neighbouring village was on his death-bed with a fell disease. He sought Swamiji's blessings in his last moments. Swamiji was touched by the sincerity of the request and he at once went in the conveyance brought by the messenger. At the approach to the patient's house Swamiji warned Mr. Kunhiraman Menon not to accompany him to the house as the disease was virulent and infectious. Swamiji went alone and on his return said to Mr. Menon "Poor young man. He is dying. I have blessed him. He was insistent on my touching him. It was good that I stopped you. The disease is, indeed, very malignant. May God save his soul."

The next day the Swami went to Calicut. The Tampan's desire and request was that Swamiji might be pleased to visit his Palace at Kollangode where his aged mother was desirous of meeting a gurubhai of Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji graciously consented. One of Mr. Tampan's relations who was then living with him was so much attracted by the Swami's personality that he became the Swami's disciple after a few years. He (now Swami Srikandhananda) was the first monastic disciple of the Swami from British Malabar. In the afternoon, while Swamiji was at his tobacco pipe he suddenly said : I shall have to go on an outing just now. Somebody may come here to take me."

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A few minutes after, Mr. Rarichan Moopan, the aristocratic leader of the Tiyya community and a follower of Sri Narayana Guru, came and requested the Swami to visit their temple. He agreed and visited the temple. He made enquiries as to the method of worship carried on there and he observed many things of which he spoke very interestingly and instructively in later days. From Calicut he went to Kollangode and stayed there two days as Mr. Tampan's family guest.

Swamiji had invited his Badagara friends to Bangalore. Mr. Menon with three other friends went to Bangalore during Christmas. A young devotee (Mr. Rajagopal Naidu) received them at the Railway Station and took them to the Ashrama. The Swami received them with all love and he was all attention to every item of their comfort. The season was cold and the guests were short of warm clothing. Swamiji gave them each a woollen banyan which, Mr. Menon says "served us for years. The warmth and joy of Swamiji's hospitality were striking and uncommon." After a very happy stay of four days. Mr. Menon's friends returned to Malabar and with his blessings he left for Benares where the Holy Mother, Sri Maharaj and party were sojourning at that time.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FIRST ASHRAMA IN KERALA.
HARIPAD.

In the meantime, the Bhaktas and the public of Haripad were all astir. After the Swami's visit they did not allow grass to grow under their feet. The foundation stone for the Ashrama had been laid by the Swami during his third visit to the place on the 11th of September 1912. Brahmachari Venkatasubramanya Iyer (Now Swami Chitsukhananda) had given a piece

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of land for the building. Mr. Subbaraya Iyer (Vakil and Vice President of the Ramakrishna Association) had donated Rupees thousand—the amount which he had presented to Swamiji on his first visit but which Swamiji had asked him to be reserved for use in Haripad. With contributions from devotees and through the untiring efforts of the late Mr. Padmanabhan Tampi (Swami Parananda), the President of the Association, the construction of the building went on vigorously. Just then Mr. Tampi, who was also the 1st Class Magistrate of the place, received an order transferring him to a distant station. The leader's absence would have much hampered the work. The devotees were greatly disheartened. Swamiji was then on the spot. They informed him of it. That night Swamiji had a dream in which the Swami Vivekananda appeared to him and asked him not to be worried over the matter. He said: "it is Sri Gurumaharaj's work and it will go on without any hitch or hindrance." The next morning the Swami encouraged them by narrating his dream. Within a few hours of it Mr. Tampi got another order cancelling his transfer. Then with redoubled energy they worked and the Ashrama was ready for opening on the 4th of May 1913, the day they had originally fixed up. The Swami with Swami Vishuddhananda arrived on the 27th of April to direct and supervise the arrangements. Many Bhaktas came from distant parts of Travancore and Malabar. On the appointed day proceedings commenced at 6 A.M. with recitation of Sri Rudram, Chandi, and Gita. All Vedic rites were duly performed. And all other usual items such as Bhajana, procession, etc., were also gone through. All considered it a special occasion, for it was the first Ashrama in Kerala, the first to be opened by the Swami.

After the solemn ceremonies, the Swami must have felt himself on his own ground. Within the Ashrama premises, in the house of Sri Gurumaharaj, he

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would not allow any social tyranny, he would have his own way, the way of love and same-sightedness. Till that day the untouchability and unapproachability of Kerala, denounced by Swami Vivekananda as befitting only lunatics, was nowhere more vigorously kept than in the house of God and before Him. The Swami today permitted all Hindus without any distinction of caste or class to enter the Ashrama and worship Bhagavan. Deep-rooted, age-long prejudice raised its ugly hood and protested that in that case many of the Bhaktas would withdraw themselves and their support. Thundering came the Swami's instantaneous reply: "Every one of you may desert me. But I cannot lower my ideal. If you make me starve, I know that Sri Gurumaharaj will come and feed me." All bowed down. But after the Swami's departure, the inmates of the Ashrama were made the victims of tyranny with a vengeance. Even barbers and washermen boycotted the inmates. The Brahmacharins were often stoned by their own castemen. But they stood firm and helped themselves. Prejudice and superstition did not, however, die out. It lingered on and exhibited itself in another form at the next celebration. There was a very big gathering to take prasad. Here again for the first time on a public occasion in Kerala the distinction of high caste and low caste was obliterated and all castes sat together. The first batch was served. When they rose, those engaged to remove the leaves refused to do the work on the ground that the low castes had polluted everything. The Swami who was all alert and observing everything, saw the situation and rose equal to it. "They are all the devotees of Bhagavan. I am their servant. I have no caste. But you should all maintain yours." So saying, he began to remove the leaves himself. None, assembled there had ever thought of that. No sooner had the Swami touched one or two leaves than there was a rush by all to do the work themselves. In a few minutes the place was clean for the next batch to sit. Haripad was

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one of the citadels of Brahmin orthodoxy. The Swami stormed it without firing a shot.

But the Swami's love for and sympathy with the lower classes was not the sentimentalism of the so-called reformers. He did not pander to their vanity, nor did he tolerate their weakness. Once a carpenter, representing his class asked Swamiji why they, the descendants of Viswakarma, were now treated as low class people. The Swami replied: "One of the monkeys asked such a question. 'We are the descendants of the Great Hanuman, the hero of many exploits, the servant of Rama, the terror of Rakshasas. He is worshipped by men. But we are slighted, and ill-treated by them. Why is it so?' They were told: "Be Hanumans yourselves and you too will be worshipped. Mere vaunting of the greatness of one's anscestors will not make you great. Acquire that quality which made Viswakarma great. Then you will rise in the estimation of all."

After the feeding of the Daridra Narayanas at noon on the day of installation, Swamiji held a brilliant conversazione. In the evening there was a public meeting which was very largely attended. There were many speakers, Mr. Tampi (the President of the Association,) Mr. Kunhiraman Menon from Parapanangadi, Mr. M. R. Narayana Pillai, Munsiff, Dr. Tampi, Mr. C. K. Krishna Pillai and others. It was the Swami who dragged Mr. Menon to the platform to make his maiden speach. It had a telling effect on the audience. It may be noted here that it was the practice with Swamiji to invite Bhaktas from distant parts to participate in such functions thus giving them opportunities to make new and renew old acquaintances and to form a sort of brotherhood among the devotees of Bhagavan. In making Mr. Menon to speak on the occasion the Swami was following another practice of his bringing out the latent possibilities of devotees.

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THE SECOND ASHRAMA.

From Haripad the Swami and party proceeded to Thiruvella, touching Mannar, Mavelikara and other places. The construction of the Ramakrishna Mandiram having been completed, the Swami performed the installation ceremony on the 9th of May 1913

On being asked as to how the Puja was to be conducted Swamiji said : "There is no need of any formalism or ritualism. Conduct yourself as you would in the presence of Bhagavan. Feel his presence and serve him as you would serve a person in the usual ways."

A devotee of the orthodox type asked him about the Manasa Puja. He replied: "Say with all your heart "O! Lord, all the flowers that bloom in the world are for you, graciously accept them. The fruits in the whole creation are Thine, deign to accept them. The daintiest dishes anywhere on earth are for you. Pray accept them." That is Manasa Puja. Along with that you should do some Manushapuja. How many are ill-clad! Feed them, clothe them to the best of your means. Without this Manushapuja, mere Manasapuja is of no effect.

On his way back, he visited Tellicherry, Calicut, and Parapanangady (where Mr. Kunhiraman Menon was then practising); some new devotees and friends were introduced to him. It was at this time that the great devotee, Sri P. Parukutty Amma (the mother of Swami Tapasyanandaji) first saw him at Calicut.

CHAPTER XVI.

OTTAPALAM BLESSED.

It was now nearly 6 years since the Swami had come to Bangalore. Under him the Ashrama had grown considerably in its usefulness to the public. The visit of the

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Most Holy Mother had invested it with a special sanctity; its attractiveness had been enhanced with the additions and extension to the buildings, the compound and the garden; its activities had extended far beyond the limits of the city and the State and had reached up to the southern-most point of India. The State and its people were glad and rightly proud of such a spiritual centre in their midst. H. H. the Yuvaraja of Mysore with the Dewan attended the Fifty-second Birthday Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda celebrated at the Ashrama. He was so highly gratified at its conduct and activities that he associated himself with the public in offering thanks and grateful appreciation for the Swami's noble work. He was also pleased to promise an annual contribution of a hundred rupees for the upkeep of the Ashrama.

After that year's celebration of the Birthday of Sri Ramakrishna in March, Swamiji proceeded to Travancore. On his way, he broke journey at Ottapalam—Blessed Ottapalam! Thy name is ever associated with the sweet name Nirmalananda! Of his first visit, his host, Mr. V. K. Narayanan Nair, a vakil of the local bar, writes as follows:

"Blessed indeed is the day on which I bowed my head at his sacred feet. It was in the year 1914 that in response to an invitation from me the Swamiji blessed Ottapalam with his holy presence. We had started a Vedanta Society here, and under the auspices of that Society we had, the previous year, celebrated the Birth-day Anniversary of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. The Swami Sharvananda from Madras was kind enough to preside on the occasion. His address was very much appreciated by the public. I was, however, longing to meet a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. The opportunity was not long in presenting itself. I was informed by my friend, Mr. Kunhiraman Menon, that Swamiji would be passing Ottapalam on his way to Travancore in connection with some work there. Our little place with its quiet atmosphere and attractive natural scenery might serve as a good halting place for the Swamiji. So,

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I made bold to request the Swamiji to break his journey here and to take rest for a day or two. I introduced myself as a humble devotee of Sri Ramakrishna and wrotc to say that myself and the people of the place would feel happy if the Swamiji would alight at Ottapalam and stay here for a couple of days. Though I had been forestalled in my invitation, as my good fortune would have it, the Swamiji accepted my invitation and consented to be my guest.

"A teacher, a father, a protector, a friend, what indeed is not the Swamiji to us is the feeling the Swamiji has inspired in the hearts of myself and all the people of Kerala who have had the good fortune to come in direct contact with him. But when I first rested my eyes on him, he looked to be quite an ordinary Sanyasin. He talked, laughed and behaved just like other men. 'Religion is not abnormality, I heard the Swamiji once remarked to a certain gentleman. In fact there was nothing abnormal about the Swami, and but for that majestic voice that carried conviction with it and those sparkling eyes that seemed to penetrate into the innermost recesses of your souls, there was nothing about the Swami to mark him out from the ordinary run of sadhus. A peculiar light ever shone in those vigilent eyes, the scrutiny of which nothing could possibly escape. They were indeed the eyes of a spiritual detective. No wonder, therefore, that hyprocrites trembled before him. On the very day of the Swamiji's arrival at Ottapalam, we had an instance of how his piercing eyes could at once see through the mask of hypocricy. A young man had come to pay his respects to the Swamiji. He could discourse on religious subjects with fluency which compelled admiration. The public were quite enamoured of his speeches and thought that there was a brilliant spiritual future in store for him. That was the first time, however, that the Swami had set his eyes on him. And yet immediately the man took his departure, the Swami said, 'that young man did not impress me at all', and reminded us of the saying of Gurumaharaj, 'beware of him whose

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words flow like water.' Sufficient to say that the subsequent conduct of the man justified the Swamiji's observation and the public had occasion to see the real nature of the man revealed in all its sordidness.

" The Swamiji appeared to be a born leader. He looked imperious and carried himself like one in authority. But there was not the slightest vestige of false pride in him. When the Swamiji's arrival was announced, by me, many people asked me who he was. I told them that he was a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. A leading Vakil of the place came to see the Swamiji and greeted him thus :—' I hear, Swami, that you are a Sabrahmachari of Vivekananda.' At once came the reply, ' Sir, I am a devoted servant of his—a servant of his servants.' The Vakil turned to me in blank astonishment, and of course, I had to explain to him what the Swamiji meant. Such was the Swami's humility and devotion to Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.

" A bolder Sanyasin than the Swami I have never been able to meet. He did what he thought was right, and never paused to consider what people would say or think about it. The true mettle of the monk exhibited itself in the supreme indifference with which he regarded what worldlings said or wouldsay about him. Never would he pander to the whims or crotchets of others so that he might have a larger following. A Brahmin teacher of the local High School who had a high opinion of his own spiritual attainments and who thought it an honour to entertain Sanyasins came and invited the Swami for bhiksha. He began by saying that Swami Sharvananda was his guest when he visited Ottapalam. There was a merry twinkle in the eyes of the Swamiji, but he simply said : " I am at the disposal of so and so . I can think of other invitations only if he is tired of me.' I understood the hint and the gentleman went away disappointed. The next day, however, he came again. The conversation turned upon orthodoxy and the gentleman said something, I forget what, insinuating that it was not proper on the Swami's part to have

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declined the invitation of a man belonging to a caste superior to the Swami's host in myself. The Swami thought that it was a good opportunity to give the gentleman a piece of his mind. He said he cared a rotten reed for caste, he cared for sincerity only. He asked why the Lord Krishna preferred to be a guest of Vidura, a Sudra, when so many Kshatriya Chieftains had invited him. In winding up the topic the Swami remarked that according to the ancient Shastras, a Brahmin could not stoop to cook his own meal, it had to be done for him by others. The Kshatriyas of old entertained Sudras as cooks and the remnant of the old custom is still seen in some old kshatriya families still retaining a barber as head-cook.

"The Swami was nothing if he was not bold and fearless, as bold in words as in action. If religious cranks came to him he snubbed them without remorse. A so-called spiritual enthusiast came to see him. I then happened to be engaged in some work. The man knew only Malayalam, but some how signified his desire to have a talk with the Swami. I was sent for to act as interpreter. There stood the young man before the Swami, his eyes rolled up, his lips moving, presumably the outward manifestation of the process of uttering some Mantram. The Swami looked amused at first. After a while, when he had given the Swami a detailed account of how he was spending his life, how he could go without meals for days together, how he had conquered sleep and felt no need for it, he wanted Swami's advice as to how he should proceed further with his Sadhanas. 'My advice to you, young man' said the Swami, 'is to go home, apply some nice cooling oil to your head, have a good bath in cold water, eat nutritious food and sleep well at night. That is the Sadhana you now require.' The man was evidently disappointed and after he had taken his departure, the Swami observed with pain in his voice: 'I am really sorry for that young man. He is heading for the lunatic asylum and if he does not do as I suggested, he would ere long be the inmate of a Mental

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Hospital.' Would you believe it, reader! That young man is now a roaring lunatic.

"Yet another enthusiast came. His crotchet was Pranayama. He requested the Swami to give him instructions as regards breathing exercise. The Swami said gravely: 'My friend, religion does not consist in inflating the lungs with air. If that were so, footballs would be the greatest Yogis in the world.' This is only one instance of the summary way in which Swamiji dismissed persons who sought instructions with ulterior motives or went in quest of short cuts to heaven without performing the difficult task of character moulding."

Such were some of the incidents which enlivened the days of the Swami's stay at Ottapalam. And such days were many. Every year, on his way to and from Travancore, Swamiji used to halt at Ottapalam and be Mr. V. K's guest. From the very first he felt that there were some pure souls in it. The quiet atmosphere and the charming scenery with the winding Bharata river close by and the hills overlooking it, must have appealed to him as reminders of his favourite forest retreats of old. He liked the place, he loved his host and the inmates of the family very dearly. Every time he used to stay with them for three days, if not more. Theirs was one of the houses where he loved to stay, and during his many happy sojourns there from 1914 to 1926, till the opening of the Ashrama, it made itself holy and rendered meritorious service as a meeting places for the Swami's disciples, devotees and friends. The local Vedanta Society had its meetings, classes and other services conducted in the spacious hall on the upper story of the 'Kamalalaya Press' building. During his annual visits, the Swamiji used to be invited to this place also. The society used to celebrate the birthday anniversary of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, during the Swamiji's visit to this place. The visit to Ottapalam in South Malabar was one of the most momentous incidents in the field of the Swami's activities in the south. Synchronising with

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it, another event was taking shape in North Malabar, the transfer of ownership to the Ramakrishna Mission of the Yoga Mutt of Quilandy. It was a place of worship dedicated to the War-Lord and Yogi, Skanda. There was a small habitation attached to it where wandering sadhus found shelter. The institution had come into being with the help of public funds and the exertions of a retired member of the local bar, by name Mr. K. P. Krishnan Nair, who lived in the Mutt and managed it. He had been invited by Mr. Kunhiraman Menon to meet the Swami at Badagara. He was very much impressed with the views, aims and objects and method of work of the Ramakrishna Mission as explained by the Swami. Ever since he had the idea that the objects of the Mutt would be best served by giving it over to the Ramakrishna Mission. He told Mr. Menon of his laudable intention. Mr. Menon ascertained from the Swami that he was prepared to take it up. At a public meeting held in April 1914, it was resolved to hand over the Mutt to the Mission. A deed was accordingly drawn up and registered in the name of the President Maharaj.

Swamiji left Ottapalam for Haripad which he reached on the 6th of April 1914. On the 10th, the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated on the grandest possible scale. The next day a large number of Panchamas came to pay their respects to Swamiji and a Panchama boy was dedicated to the cause of Sri Ramakrishna. The Swami remained in the Ashram for some days, teaching and training Brahmacharins and disciples. And he laboured hard at it. Nothing was overlooked as small. In fact, with him, there was nothing small in life. There are no parts in perfection, life is one indivisible whole and a perfect life, must be perfect in all its phases, in all actions, however trivial or insignificant they may be in the eyes of the world. To cite but one instance :—Swamiji with some devotees were sitting for meditation in the hall in front of the shrine room. The resident Brahmacharin offered Naivedyam and closed the door which made a noise. After

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getting up, the Swami chided him severely. 'You think meditation is a child's play and a show. Would Bhagavan have got angry with you if you had not shut the door and made that disturbing noise? Could you not have offered Naivedyam and sat down in a corner to meditate?' he asked.

From Haripad he paid a flying visit to Trivandrum. Returning he proceeded to Kandiyoor and Muttam, villages in the interior of Central Travancore. At the Weaving Institute at Kandiyoor many people had assembled. After Bhajana and Arathi, the Swami held a conversation answering many questions. 'Where was the necessity for an Avatara in the present age?' was one of the questions. In a lucid and lengthy answer Swamiji explained evolution and the economic law of supply and demand, analysed the needs of different ages, established the necessity and drew a brilliant picture of Sri Ramakrishna as the Avatar of the age. His words sank deep into the hearts of his hearers. Many of them became his disciples and, in course of time, an Ashrama sprang up at Mutton.

From Mavelikara, the Swami went to Mannar where conversations were held on diverse subjects such as Baby Christ, Girish Ghosh, Suresh Babu, fanaticism, etc.

Thiruvella was the next destination. After spending a few busy days at the Ramakrishna Mandiram opened there the previous year, he presided over the Anniversary of the Birthday of Sri Ramakrishna. In the report of the years' work, a gentleman who had contributed much for the progress of the movement there was highly praised. After the day's proceedings terminated Swamiji turned round on the Brahmacharin and told him indignantly that he was not a true devotee and that he did not know what the spirit of the Mission was. "Each one serves the cause, said the Swami, "according to his means and capacity. In the morning, I saw one of the cooks standing in front of the blazing fire stirring the Payasam vigorously and perspiring profusely. He was

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not an official nor a rich man. Was it the reason that you did not praise him?" he asked.

Thus from the very outset, he began to infuse the true religious spirit into the Brahmacharins and disciples. He made them realise that he was no respector of persons but of principles only.

From Thiruvella he went to Haripad again and from there started for Bangalore touching Alleppey and Shertallay on the way.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SHIVA DANCE : GURUBHAIS' LOVE.

After his return to Bangalore it became necessary for him to go to North India to see the Swami Brahmanandaji. In dealing with the land on which the Ashrama was situated, there arose a technical difficulty. The land was registered in the Bangalore Revenue and Municipal Records in the name of the "President, Ramakrishna Mission Institute, Bangalore." Though the Swami was the President for the time being there was no formal deed of trust or appointment in his own name. The Public of Bangalore had placed the Ashrama at the disposal of Swami Brahmananda when he opened it in 1909. And it was Swami Brahmananda who sent the Swami to Bangalore. The Swami therefore held himself as an Agent of the Swami Brahmanada. To make his position clear and to give it a legal status, it became necessary to get the Swami Brahmanandaji either to execute a Power-of-Attorney in his name or to make other disposition. With this end in view he left Bangalore.

Two of the Swami's devotees at Mavelikara (Mr. Madhuram Pillai, now Swami Ambananda and his brother Damodaran Pillai) had expressed a desire to

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visit the Belur Mutt and the northern Thirthas. The Swami graciously asked them to accompany him. They joined him at Madras. Reaching Calcutta early, the party stayed there for the Dasara Celebrations. The Swami's love for the devotees who had followed him made him request the most Holy Mother to bless them with initiation. The Mother consented and on the day of the Mahalaya Amavasya both of them were initiated by her. They were also fortunate enough to have her Holy feet washed and the Charanamritham taken home. All of them stayed in the Belur Mutt. On the Vijaya Dasami day the devotees witnessed an extraordinary spectacle, one which ever remains green in memory—a Shiva dance by the Swamis of the Mutt. It was first proposed that Swami Premanandaji should take the place of Shiva. But he insisted on Swami Nirmalananda's taking that place. All agreed. The Swami was installed as Shiva. Swami Premanandaji garlanded him and all the Swamis danced the Blissful dance. It was a sight for the very gods to see!

Regarding Swami Premanandaji and the other Iswara-Koti disciples of the Master, Swamiji once said: 'Oh, they are all gods who have come down to the earth taking human bodies. Ah! This D—was telling that they were of the—party. So Premanandaji called them over one day to his room at Dacca, closed the room and tried to make them realise their folly. But they would not be convinced and they began to discuss with him. Then Premanandaji told them: "You have become learned by studying English, is it not so?" So saying he pressed the shoulder of D—who was one of those discussing hotly. At once, his arguing attitude left him and his life was completely changed, transformed. Is this the work of an ordinary man?"

And was it a mere fancy of Swami Premanandaji to instal Swami Nirmalanandaji as Shiva and dance round him? Did not Premanandaji actually see the great Shiva—Rudra—Hara—Mahadeva—manifest in

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him? Was any heart more tender and larger than his? Had it not a corner in it even for the worst sinners.

One day—a Rathayatra day—the Swami was sitting in the Verandah of the first floor of the Belur Mutt, facing the Ganges. Boats were passing up the river with passengers going to attend the Rathayatra festival at Mahesh. In one of the boats were some persons of ill-repute and public women, singing and making themselves merry. The boat was passing quite close to the Mutt. One of the devotees who were near Swamiji remarked: "Look at these young men! They have no respect or reverence for the Mutt and no sense of shame to pass close by it in such company and in such profligate manner. They ought to have behaved better in front of this sacred place." At this Swamiji said: "My child, you know very well, how full of misery this world is! If they contrive to forget their misery and woe even for a short time in this manner, they are to be pardoned and congratulated." Vast and pure as the heavens, his heart had not a single harsh fibre in it. It loved all, it blessed all.

Swami Premananda's love for the Swami was such that in all the days of his stay there he had the Swami's favourite dishes carefully prepared for one and all in the Ashrama. The Swami's love for his gurubhai took the shape of ardent devotion. Most touching was the scene of his taking leave of his brother. The Swami, his face glowing with emotion and tears running down his cheeks, fell prostrate before Premanandaji. Rising they exchanged a few words. Then again the Swami made his Sashtanga Pranama. He rose. Then Premananda said something. Immediately the Swami fell down at his feet again. It was as if both of them were unwilling to be separated from each other, as if the Swami wanted nothing else for the time being, but prostrate himself before his worshipful brother again and again. The devotees present have recorded that it was only after

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the sixth Pranama that the Swami could be induced to tear himself away from that Iswara-Koti.

From Calcutta they came to Benares and paid their respects to the Swami Brahmanandaji. Spending a few days with him, the devotees desired to proceed to Rishikesh and other Thirthas. The Swami also had programmed to go with them. When this intention was communicated to Sri Maharaj, he set his face against the Swamiji's leaving him. "You have seen those Thirthas many a time. Now you have come to me. Your friends can go and see the places without you. They will come back safely. The season is not quite good and you may fall ill if you go." So the devotees had to go alone. Swamiji, of course, made all possible arrangements for their convenience and safety and he remained with Maharaj. Regarding the Bangalore Ashrama, Maharaj, thinking over the matter and taking legal advice, gave a general Power-of-Attorney in favour of the Swami. "I, Swami Brahmananda, Chela and disciple of Thakur Paramahamsa Ramakrishna of the sect of Sanyasin, at present residing in Ramakrishna Adwaita Ashrama, Mohalla, Luxa in the City of Benares x x do hereby nominate, constitute and appoint Swami Nirmalananda, Chela and disciple of Thakur Paramahamsa Ramakrishna, at present in charge of the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bangalore City, to be my true and lawful attorney for me and on my behalf x x to carry out the full purport and intentions of these presents for the due and proper management of the said Ramakrishna Ashrama Bangalore City and properties standing in my name for the benefit of the said Ashrama or any other Ashrama which may be established in any place in South India x x". With these words the power was drawn up, signed and delivered on the 25th of October 1914.

The two devotees went up to Rishikesh. Swami Turiyanandaji was then residing there. On the day of their arrival, he had gone somewhere and returned late

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in the night. They could not meet him that day, but hearing of their arrival, he went to their residence at 5 o'clock in the morning, and called out to them "who is it that has come from Tulasi Maharaj ?' The devotees approached him and made their pranamas. "Where is Tulasi Maharaj ? . Why has he not come with you ?" They explained the circumstances which detained him at Benares. Then with glistening eyes he asked "should I not also see your Swamiji ?" The devotees were themselves greatly moved seeing the expression of love and longing in the Swami's face. He was very kind and helpful to them during their stay. Taking leave of him they returned to Benares via Allahabad and other places. But before they reached Benares Swami Turiyanandaji had arrived there. Though in weak health, he had come all the way down just to meet his beloved brother, the Swami Nirmalanandaji. That, alas ! was their last meeting.

Staying there for a few days more, the Swami and party took leave of Swami Brahmanandaji and Turiyanandaji and returned to Bangalore.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALL KERALA AWAKENED.

Although the Yoga Mutt at Quilandy had been gifted to the President Maharaj in June 1914, and the public was expecting the Swami to go over there immediately and consecrate it as an Ashrama, the Swami could not do so. After his return from Benares, he turned his attention to that centre. The usual Birthday Celebration at Bangalore being over, he started for Quilandy. The Swami had in the meantime given instructions for the arrangements to be made for the consecration. He had his friends and devotees

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invited from different parts of Kerala. He had also brought down Bhakta Neelakanta from Thiruvella to be in charge of the Ashrama to be opened at Quilandy. The Swami, accompanied by Swami Vishuddhananda, broke his journey at Ottapalam, stayed there for a few days and reached Quilandy on the 30th March 1915. The next day the first Ashrama in British Malabar was duly consecrated. All the usual rites and ceremonies such as Homa, etc, were performed. The poor were sumptuously fed. Devotees from Travancore and all parts of Malabar and South Canara had mustered strong. Public meetings and speeches and Swamiji's illuminating conversations followed. The function really looked an all-Kerala affair. The Swami remained there for a few days giving interviews and instructions and making arrangements for the future conduct of the Ashrama. On his return he touched Tellicherry and Calicut, halted for a few days at Ottapalam and reached Bangalore on the 1st of April.

The Swami had now seen Kerala, from North Malabar to South Travancore, had visited not only the important towns, but also small villages in the interior with no roads or water communications, had met many of its leading men and a very large number of literate and illiterate men and women who did not know any of the languages known to him, but whose eager faces revealed a thirst for knowledge and information. He saw the thirst could be quenched and the teachings of Sri Gurumaharaj and Vivekananda disseminated broadcast only by an organ in the local vernacular and not by preachers alone, however large in numbers they might be. With this idea in mind, he came to Kerala again and discussed the matter with his friends and devotees at Quilon. It was decided to publish a monthly journal devoted to the cause of Gurumaharaj Swamiji gave it the name 'Prabuddha Keralam' (awakened Kerala). Dr. Tampi, one of the earliest devotees and one of the staunchest supporters of the movement was

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there in service at the time. There was a very good local press. The first issue was launched on the Vijaya Dasami Day, in 1915 and it became widely popular. The organ has all along been serving its purpose. Almost all the important Ramakrishna Literature has also been rendered into the vernacular of the District.

During this tour the Swami visited Kottayam, a great Christian centre, on the 7th of August At the southern entrance of the town, he was received by the members of the local Ramakrishna Bhakta Jana Sangham and several gentry of the place and escorted with a Bhajana party to the residence of Sri K. Padmanabhan Tampi (the Divisional Superintendent of Police, later Swami Parananda). The Swami blessed the students of the Ramakrishna Sunday School, who had taken part in the Bhajana The same evening he gave a discourse on religion to the members of the Young Men's Hindu Association. Next day there was a public discourse given by the Swami in the Rama Varma Union Club where tough religious questions were put to him by the Hindus as well as by the Non-Hindus and the Swami answered them all with his usual eloquence and brilliance. Informal talks also were held by the Swami. The next morning he left for Alleppey.

Since his first visit to Alleppey, a small body of educated men, Messrs. G. Krishna Pillai, Krishna Menon, P. G Govinda Pillai and others, had been congregating regularly for religious worship and the study of religious books. Swamiji used to visit them on his journeys encourage them in their activities and help them in their studies.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TIDAL WAVE OF SPIRITUALITY.

After a short stay at Alleppey he left for Trivandrum. The devotees had all these days been on the

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look out for a proper site for an Ashrama. About five miles to the north-east of the town, at Nettayam, there is a hilly, jungly tract in which Mr. Arunachalam Pillai (Retired Telegraph Master) owned about 300 acres. He came forward with an offer of 5 acres for the purpose. It then seemed to the devotees that an Ashrama there would be something like a forest retreat. The Swami inspected the site and agreed to accept it. On the 23rd of December 1915 the gift deed was signed and delivered.

Now, the Swami set his heart on the work of building a first rate Ashrama on the hill top, far removed from the town's maddening crowd. The magnitude of the work had been hardly thought of by any of the enthusiasts and no one had any idea as to the final shape the Ashrama was going to take. The devotees' original estimate of the cost was Rs. seven thousand. Very soon it was found out that it would not fall short of Rs. twenty thousand. Then it went up to fifty. Finally it came to over a lakh of rupees. It was the Swami himself and his friend, Mr. Hrisheekesh Banerji, Assistant Engineer, that made the design and also alterations in it from time to time.

The Swamiji probably knew at the very outset that that Ashrama in the Capital of the State was destined to be in point of location, design and structure, the finest and strongest in India. He desired to have the foundation stone laid by His Serene Holiness, the Swami Brahmananda.

To request him to do it, the Swami decided to go to Calcutta. Before starting, he busied himself in Travancore with the work of collecting money and materials, and of supervising the clearing and levelling of the ground. He was constantly on the move, attending to every detail of the work as it proceeded and also ministering to the spiritual needs of the devotees.

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In May 1916, he started for Calcutta. This time he took two of his dearest devotees, Dr. Tampi and Mr. Kunhiraman Menon with him to get them initiated by the President. Such was his love for his devotees that he had felt sorry that Mr. Menon had not asked Maharaj for initiation at his first visit. He had therefore asked him to accompany him to North India during his previous trip. When he pleaded inability, Swamiji admonished him for putting off such things. This time, however, he took both Mr. Menon and Dr. Tampi with him to Calcutta. They were initiated by Sri Maharaj.

During their stay there, they were privileged to witness the holy mutual love of such of the children of Sri Ramakrishna as were present there. They had grown up into spiritual luminaries of the highest order as had been forseen by their Master and foretold by their Chief. "They are each a centre of religious power and in time that power will manifest" (C. W. Vol. VII, page 256). So had the Swami Vivekananda said about them. The two devotees also saw the high esteem in which the Swami was held by his guru-bhais. One day, there was a conversation class at the Belur Mutt. A large number of devotees had come from Calcutta. Quite unusually Sri Maharaj also came down to the class. The other senior Swamis were all present. Sri Maharaj said : "Tulasi will lead the class. If any one had any further doubts, I shall put in a word." There was hardly any necessity for it. The Swami's answers were so clear and convincing.

After a long stay, when the devotees were ready to return, the Swami told them of his desire to take Sri Maharaj to Kerala. Sri Maharaj had just then returned from a tour in East Bengal. He was saying that he felt tired. He could not therefore be then approached with the proposal to visit distant Kerala. The Swami said, he would remain there until he found a favourable moment to move the matter. So the

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devotees returned, mentally praying for the fulfilment of Swamiji's desire.

To accompany Sri Maharaj and to serve him in any journey which he undertook of his own accord was itself an onerous work, though, at the same time, a coveted privilege. But to request and persuade him to undertake a journey up to the southern most point of India and to take up the entire responsibility for his convenience, comfort and safety on one's shoulders was a burden which a superman alone could afford to bear. Swamiji dared to bear it cheerfully, because of his unlimited love for the Master's children in the South and also because of his unsurpassed boldness and unbounded self-confidence.

Some months passed. Swamiji made the request and Maharaj was graciously pleased to grant it. The joyous news was transmitted to Kerala. All were alert and astir to receive the Fountain of Bliss unalloyed into their midst. The Swami with unerring knowledge of men and things apportioned and allotted to different devotees the sacred work of serving Sri Maharaj and party at the several places he was to touch or visit. Maharaj and party reached Bangalore on the 12th of August 1916.

They were given a grand reception at the Bangalore City Railway Station. Maharaj was also presented with an address of welcome. Reaching the Ashrama, he was so very pleased with what he saw that he asked Sri Kumuda Bandhu Sen who had accompanied him to write to Swami Premananda giving a full description of the Ashrama. The Swami's work for the untouchables was also highly appreciated by Maharaj who used to praise him during his absence. The holy spiritual vibrations of the place were attuned to Maharaji's nature. The Swami attended on him, sometimes as Lakshmana on Sri Ramachandra, at other times as a disciple on his Guru and yet at others as Yesoda on her Krishna. Maharaj was quite happy there. Swamiji felt even happier. Three months and more passed.

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The season of the south-east monsoon was over in Kerala. The party started on 26th Nov. 1916. It included Swami Sankarananda, Bhumananda, Durganand, Nityachaithanya (Yateeswarananda), Gopal and others.

Swamiji had written to Mr. Kunhiraman Menon to take charge of the in-coming party at Ottapalam and lead it to Alwaye. On its return he was to take it from Ernakulam to Podanur.

The 26th of November dawned – the day on which the dust of Kerala was to be made holy by its contact with the blessed feet of the spiritual son of the Avatara of the age. The Mail Train conveying him and the party reached Olavacode, the first Railway Station in Kerala where the Mail Train from Madras halted. A young man known to the Swami had been sent there to inform him in advance that Ottapalam was ready to receive them. Mr. Menon had gone there the previous day. A rich Malabar dinner for the party, prepared at the hospitable hearth of the Swami's host at Ottapalam, was carried to the Railway Station. The train steamed in. The hearts of the devotees leapt with joy and beat in anxiety at the same time—joy, that they were about to see and serve the Mahapurushas and party and anxiety that the many vessels containing the dinner may not all go into the train intact in a minute's time the train halted there. The Swami, with a joyous smile on his face was peeping out and greeting them. The devotees saluted them and got themselves and all the vessels intact into the train, and prostrated before Sri Maharaj. He was in a very happy mood, serene, majestic and with a gentle smile playing upon his countenance. The Swami was also in the same compartment. There were also some big guns of Malabar talking incessantly of Legislative Councils and other matters. Reaching Shoranur, the party changed to the Shoranur-Ernakulam Train. With the help of the friend of Mr. Menon, who was a

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railway servant, permission was obtained to serve the dinner in the spacious upper class compartment.

Sri Maharaj was served first by Mr. Menon himself in a First Class Compartment. He seemed to relish the dishes very much, asking for more and more. When he had finished and begun to take rest, all the others were served and all of them did full justice to the preparations. The Swami was highly pleased that the party felt satisfied, and he congratulated Mr. Menon on his having served Maharaj with his own hands—for Maharaj could not take cooked food touched by all.

Several devotees had come to Shoranur just to catch a glimpse of Sri Maharaj. Leaving Shoranur, the party reached Alwaye—a famous river resort where a halt was made. Mr. Tampi (Swami Parananda) and other devotees from Travancore accorded the party a fitting reception. A fine and spacious river-side Bangalow had been engaged for the party's stay. Maharaj seemed to be in high spirits. In the evening he took a short excursion to the river. He was merry like a child. Every one felt comfortable and happy. The next day, people assembled in large numbers to pay their respects to Maharaj and Swamiji. Maharaj was in a mood to speak and he spoke for long on various subjects such as pilgrimages, sacred places, Japa, Dhyana, Samadhi, etc. As it was very rarely that Sri Maharaj spoke in public, the substance of his talk, as reported in the Prabuddha Kerala, is given below.

"Pilgrimages are beneficial in many ways. The chief advantage is that we are enabled to meet holy men and serve them. Another advantage is that worldly thoughts tend to decrease and there is constant remembrance of God. No doubt these will aid us in our spiritual progress. We will gain much spiritual knowledge also.

"Kashi (Benares) is a very sacred place. Many Sadhus (holy men) live there. Thus we get the opportunity to be in their company. A spiritual

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current is always flowing in Kashi. House-holders have many facilities for the worship of the Lord there. It would be good if you could stay there for a time.

"Vrindavan is another sacred place. There are many Sadhus there immersed in the contemplation of the Lord, day and night. You ought to go and see those places. Work, you will have always. But in spite of this, find time to visit these places at least once. So far as work is concerned, there is some which will lead you Godward. Unselfish work belongs to this class. But selfish work will never help you in your spiritual path. Know that your wife, children and all, which you now call yours, belong to the Lord. If you have this firm belief, everything will go on all right for you. The contrary belief will bring about a contrary result.

ii.

"Repetition of the Holy name of the Lord is very good. The mind will become pure through it. While repeating the name of the Lord you should keep remembrance of the Lord in your mind. Such repetition and remembrance will do much good. Mere repetition without the remembrance of the Lord will not be of much use. I do not say that this is easy. To do it, one must have Upadesha, or initiation by the Guru.

"The Guru will determine your Ishta-Devata (form of Ideal) and other things necessary for your spiritual progress. According to the difference in the nature of each individual, there are many Ishta-Devatas. One cannot suit all. Until spiritual knowledge dawns upon you, you have to follow the direction of your Guru. The more you work, the purer you become.

"To practise without the aid of the Guru is always very difficult. A few rare souls of exceptional strength of mind might be able to realise without any such external help. Yet, it is better to work under the guidance of a Guru. Then there is no possibility of your committing any mistake. Still you should not

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remain idle, because you have not got a Guru. Begin at once and the Guru will come in proper time.

"The Guru must select the Sishya (disciple) and the Sishya must choose the Guru. Otherwise, if one alone selects, it is not so good. Only a perfect soul (Siddha-Guru) can really help the disciple. Such a Guru alone can give initiation according to the differences in the nature of the disciples. An ordinary Guru can do no such thing. This latter is ready to give Upadesha to any one at any time. When the proper time comes, God will send you your Guru. Until you get such a Guru, your duty is the worship of the Lord. If not, your days will be spent in vain. Hence have regular meditation, Japa and Bhajana (singing the praises of the Lord) every day.

iii.

"As you proceed with meditation you will see that you are getting more and more realisation. There is no use in merely reading the Shastras (Sacred Scriptures) and discussing about them. By meditation the mind will become pure, and when the mind becomes pure, realisation of God follows as a matter of course. Ordinarily, we hold our mind on wordly matters. No result worth the name comes out of this. But if you fix your mind in the pure thought of God, you will feel a taste of real bliss.

"All your energy is spent in wordly things. Exert yourself a little in the worship of God. You should not spend your life in vain. Begin at once. Worship the Lord. Our span of life is very short. The most important duty for us in this short life is the worship of God. If we waste our time, we can never regain it. Whatever work you may be engaged in, think of the Lord always. It is not enough if you merely sit in a corner for a short time at a certain period of the day and shut your eyes; for then you will see the whole world coming before your mind's eye.

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"It is best to start from Dualism. If you proceed a little along this path, you will find that you are naturally led to non-dualism. To see God outside of ourselves is a right path. Afterwards you will be able to see God within yourself. This is the highest form of meditation. Is not God all-pervading? Until you get the taste of bliss, you should practise meditation. Until then, Dualism is necessary. In the state of Samadhi, you will see God alone. None can describe the nature of self-realisation. So long as you have the thought of God in you, sin will not affect you."

After Maharaj, the Swami also spoke and answered questions. In the evening, the inmates of the Adwait Ashrama founded by Sri Narayana Guru presented Maharaj with an address in Sanskrit. On the 3rd day, the Swami visited the local market. After midday meal the party proceeded to Kottayam by a special Motor boat. The boat encountered a storm in the Vempanad backwaters and it could reach Kottayam only at midnight. The night was spent in the boat itself. Many of the devotees who had come to receive the party at 6 P.M., and were waiting on the shores stayed on there throughout the night. The party landed at 6 A.M., and proceeded to the town by car. After a very pleasant stay of 2 days, the party left for Haripad where a grand reception had been arranged with Poornakumbha, music, palanquine, etc. Seeing all this Maharaj smiled and playfully asked Swami, "Am I going to be made a bridegroom?" He got down from the Motor Car in front of the Temple of the Mother and walked to the Ashrama. As already observed, Haripad is a small out-of-the way village and it was thought by some that Maharaj need not be taken there at all. But the Swami thought otherwise. That he was perfectly right was made clear by Maharaji's observation as he entered the Ashrama, "Ah! what a fine place," he said. He stayed there four days and initiated a few devotees. Among them were Swami Purushothamananda, Mr. Subbaraya Iyer and

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others. Quilon was reached next. Dr. Tampi was in charge of the arrangements there. A new two storeyed house, the biggest building at Quilon, had been engaged for the party's stay. Spending two happy days there, Maharaj and party left it for Trivandrum. On the day of departure 2,000 persons were sumptuously fed. Trivandrum was reached on the 8th of December. Among those who took the lion's share in making arrangements for receiving the President Maharaj may be mentioned Dr. T. Padmanabha Pillai who was initiated by Maharaj at the Cape, Mr. M. R. Narayana Pillai, Mr. D. K. Ghose, Mr. Rama Warrier and others.

All arrangements for the laying of the foundation stone had been completed. The top of the hill was the spot selected by Swamiji for building the Ashrama. A road was newly constructed to take the Maharaj there by car. Devotees from all parts of Kerala had come early enough to partake in the ceremony. Maharaj was seated upstairs apparently established in and enjoying his own glory. By his side was Mr. Ghosh—the son of the late Kalipada Ghosh, a great house-holder devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, then in the employ of Messrs. Dickinson and Co.

Early morning on the 9th of December 1916, Maharaj with the party of Sanyasins, Brahmacharins, devotees from all Kerala motored to the top of the hill. A Pandal had been specially put up at the place and the photos of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda set up. After worship at 8 A. M., in great solemnity and with the due rites, Maharaj laid the foundation stone of the Ashrama which was to rise head and shoulders over all other Ashramas. It was well and truly laid. When asked about what all things must be made ready for the foundation ceremony Maharaj remarked "Tulasi, you remember what Swamiji did at the Belur Math. A few flowers and Ganges water. With these, if we invoke the Lord, He will respond and remain here permanently for the good of all."

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Maharaj was presented with 3 addresses, one in English and two in Sanskrit. He had said before : "I am too old to change into the European fashion by receiving and replying to addresses." So he remained absolutely silent, immoveable as a statue. The Swami Nirmalanandaji replied on his behalf in most appropriate terms.

The next day the party proceeded to the Cape where also a spacious and beautiful upstairs bangalow had been engaged for his stay. Maharaj reached the Cape by car in the evening. The next morning after ablution the Maharaj and party went to the shrine to worship the Mother. Maharaj made offerings of money at her feet. Various other offerings were also made. Standing before the Mother, beads in hand, he fell into Samadhi. His extraordinarily powerful eyes which were usually half-closed opened wide, became steady and motionless and shone like two brilliant stars. Slowly coming down to the plane of the senses, he circumabulated the Mother, came out and sat in the entrance hall, facing the east and made Japa. Afterwards he returned to his residence. Then followed a course of Tapasya for the party for nine days. On one of these days Maharaj spoke on the last days of Sri Gurumaharaj and Samadhi. Maharaji performed Kumari Puja, feeding some unmarried girls and giving them clothes, etc.

Whenever Maharaj went out, a lot of poor people approached him. Seeing them Maharaj would look for the Swamiji who was always by his side with an open bag of money. Maharaj would put his hand into the bag, take out the money and distribute it most lavishly and most graciously.

During his stay at the Cape Sri Maharaji used to go to the temple both morning and evening. Often, he would ask the monks of his party to sing while he would be seated before the Mother in ecstasy. Sometimes, he would talk to the Devi in Bhava accosting

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Her by clapping his hands and saying "Ma, Ma" Mother, Mother.

The day before he left the Cape, Maharaj initiated many fortunate souls like Swami Sukhananda, Mr. Krishna Iyer who had served the cause, heart and soul and many others. For the first time, Sri Maharaj is said to have scattered his blessings without himself looking into the merits of the recepients. The choice of the person was entirely left to the Swami. Whoever passed by him standing downstairs at the foot of the staircase was led in by the Swami Sankaranandaji to Sri Maharaj upstairs and he was initiated. It was as if the accession of strength vouchsafed to him by the Mother was being freely distributed, as desired by his beloved brother Tulasi. Ordinarily Maharaj was loth to initiate disciples. When he did, it was after proper exercise of his own discrimination and judgement. The recommendations of such highly spiritual companions as Swami Premanandaji are said to have been futile, sometimes. Usually he did not initiate more than one at a time. But here without even any personal knowledge concerning the persons, mostly house holders, he was blessing them by the score. There need be no other testimony to Maharaji's love for and trust in the Swami and in his power of judgement. Maharaj told some of his initiated disciples to receive instructions from Swamiji in case they found any doubt or difficulty in their Sadhana. He must also have been highly pleased with the most excellent tour arrangement made by the Swami. No Emperor could have had more loving service or greater comfort in such a long journey. It was as if the dearest child was being gently carried in the hands of the mother. So smooth and pleasant was the whole journey from the first to the last day. In fact, the Swami was for the time another man. He openly said: "This time service to Maharaj is my Sadhana. To look to his convenience and comfort is my sole concern". Swami was every moment wide awake. He lived and moved

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and had his being for the service of Maharaj. "Here is the living God; worship him by service,' he said to a disciple. Swami's sadhana was indeed rigorous. The desired result was more than achieved. Maharaj was perfectly happy throughout the journey, the foundation stone had been laid, the spot was rendered a holy place for pilgrimage, there was a happy family meeting of the Mother and Her children and a score of them was baptised at Her altar. Thousands were blessed by the Darsan of the Son of God. The land of Parasurama itself was blessed. Thus did the Swami labour hard and subject himself to Tapasya again, not for himself, but for his flock, for the poor, ignorant and helpless men and women of the South.

Maharaj and party left the Cape on the 3rd Dhanu, halted at Nagercoil and proceeded to Quilon where he again spent a few days.

As an illustration of the extreme love of Swamiji to the Bhaktas and the regard with which his words were heeded to by Sri Maharaj the following incident may be mentioned. It was settled that a few Bhaktas would be initiated by Sri Maharaj on a certain auspicious day at Quilon. On the appointed day, Swami Sankarananda informed Swamiji that the initiation could not take place as Maharaj was indisposed. At once Swamiji became very grave. Remarking "it is only the initiation of a few sincere souls and Maharaj shows reluctance", he went to his venerable gurubhai to persuade him to bless the devotees. In a few minutes, Maharaj came out accompanied by Swamiji, proceeded to the room where arrangements had already been made and gave initiation to all those proposed by Swamiji. They were Mr. Krishnan Nambiathiri (later Swami Agamananda), Mr. Chandrasekharan Pillay and Mr. P. Seshadri Iyer, a student devotee. On the 30th December 1916, the party started from Quilon touched Ambalapuzhai and Ernaculam, then entrained for Bangalore.

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As stated before, the Swami had made perfect arrangements for the return journey also. Mr. Kunhiraman Menon was to meet and attend to the needs of the party from Ernakulam. The Swami had wired to him the date and time of arrival at Ernakulam. The party stayed there a night and started by the mail train early next day. Mr. Kunhiraman Menon travelled with the party up to Podanur. Swamiji played a practical joke on him which was also a blessing in disguise. He had a fine little basket in his hand. It caught Swamiji's eyes. After the train left Shoranur, he would look at it and then at Mr. Menon's face alternatively. This went on for some time. Then calling the attention of Maharaj, he said: 'Maharaj, Kunhiraman has a fine basket here." Maharaj who was reading something looked up and said 'Kunhiraman, we want this basket.' 'Yes, Maharaj', he said, emptied the contents and placed it before him. Maharaj was amused and Swamiji laughed.

The train reached Ottapalam where disciples and devotees had come to pay their respects. One of them (Mr. C. Kunhiraman Nair) had brought for Maharaj some ricecakes puffed with sugar, cocoanuts and spices. Maharaj asked what it was, and like a boy took one—a pretty big one—and ate the whole of it. This was what he tasted last in Kerala. Thus it happened that of all places Ottapalam served him his first and his last Bhiksha in Kerala. The Swami accompanied Maharaj to Bangalore. After a few days' stay there, Maharaj and party returned to Calcutta *via.* Madras. Before leaving Bangalore Ashrama in January 1917 Maharaj graciously gave initiation to Rao Sahib H. Chennaya, Retired Sub-Judge, who has long been a worker in the cause of the Ramakrishna movement in Mysore and Coorg.

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CHAPTER XX.

THE MOVEMENT GROWS.

The Swami carefully prepared the ground, elevated and beautiful, and collected valuable materials for the proposed Ashrama at Trivandrum. Sri Maharaj laid the foundation stone. From now onwards the one thought dominant in the mind of Swamiji was to raise the superstructure on the foundation laid. The building must have the grace, the dignity and the grandeur befitting the person whose name it was to bear and whose hand it was that laid the stone. It must stand every possible storm and it must stand for several generations. Posterity must look upon it as a monument of the activities of a child of Sri Ramakrishna, as a towering light-house shedding spiritual light to the mariners in the dark ocean of Samsara.

Hitherto the building of an Ashrama in any place was the sole concern of the public. The Swami had no responsibility in the matter. In the case of the Trivandrum work, however, it was different. It was at his request that Brahmanandaji Maharaj had consented to lay the first stone. Now, therefore, he owed it to Maharaj to see that the work was carried on to the very end.

He set himself to the task whole-heartedly. The few thousands which were originally estimated as the cost of the building for the Ashrama had to be got from the middle class people. There were no millionaires to donate large sums. By twos and threes and even in driblets it took years to collect the necessary amount. And the Swami had himself to go about for collection. In this he was ably assisted by his friends and devotees among whom special mention has to be made of Mr. Subramania Iyer, Conservator of Forests, Dr. Tampi, his brother Mr. Padmanabhan

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SWAMIS BRAHMANANDA & NIRMALANANDA
AT BANGALORE.

FOUNDATION STONE LAYING CEREMONY
OF TRIVANDRUM ASHRAMA.

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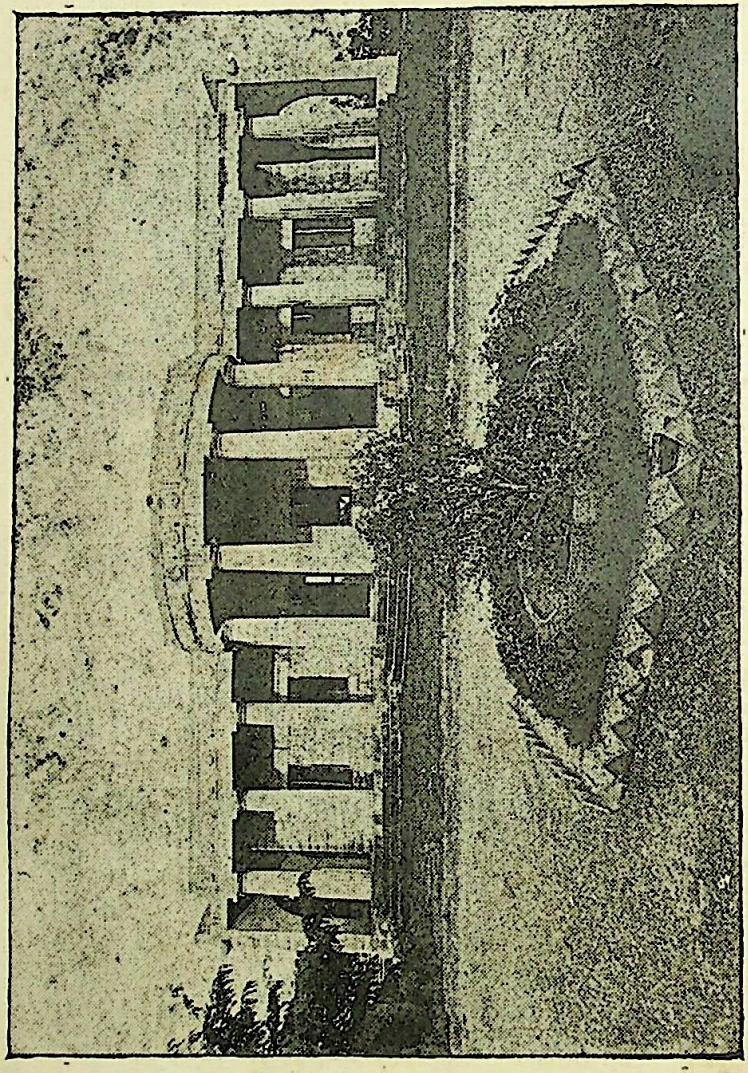

SRI BRAHMANANDA ASHRAMA
TRIVANDUM.

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Tampi (late Parananda Swami) Messrs. M. R. Narayana Pillai, C. K. Krishna Pillai, K. Raman Menon, P. G. Govinda Pillai, K. Sankara Menon (Swami Amalananda) and others, who helped him in the work of construction in various ways. The Swami's presence on the spot also became necessary for long periods. In the previous years he usually visited Kerala only once a year. But now it became necessary to visit it twice or thrice a year.

At the same time he could not forget or neglect the other centres and the devotees in other parts. We see him therefore constantly on the move from one place to another, from Bangalore to Trivandrum from Trivandrum to Bombay to Benares and Calcutta and back to Bangalore. All-India became his field of activities, the South being his Head Quarters. The nature of his work differed in the North and in the South. The North had already become familiar with the names of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and the Mission; the Swami's special work in that region was therefore limited to the fostering of the spirit already generated and to the enlightening of special individuals. In the South, he had to create an atmosphere to start and maintain centres, to train individuals and to rouse the people. He had to keep his eyes on the entire field at one and the same time, he had to run his practised hand on the many keys of his complicated and delicate machinery.

Accompanying the Maharaji's party to Madras and returning to Bangalore he fell ill with influenza, and it was in July 1917 that he came back to Trivandrum. He stayed there till about October, occupied mainly with the Ashrama work, side by side with it went on spiritual talks, meditation classes and teaching of scriptures, and visits to villages. Many and interesting were the incidents relating to these and succeeding periods; his talks were sometimes soul-stirring, sometimes mirthprovoking, always interesting. He had a fund of stories, anecdots, folklore and fun. Now

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a Bhakta, then a Jnani always a Karmayogin outwardly, but inwardly always a perfect Rajayogi.

On one of such days at Trivandrum, a visitor who had leanings towards Yoga practices asked the Swami how lost-Brahmacharya can be recouped. "Sri Ramakrishna used to say," said the Swami, "If you want to separate yourself from the west, you need not have to wrestle with it, but simply move eastwards." 'So also if you want to get rid of evil, march towards the good. Fill your mind with good thoughts, speak about pure and holy things and do only good." The visitor pressed his point and wanted the Swami to tell him how he might regain his lost Ojas. 'I know what you want,' rejoined the Swami, "some prescription to bring about a physical change. That won't be of any avail. The mind will still be hankering after the pleasures of the senses. Further such medicines or practices as incapaciate the bodily organs bring on incurable diseases also. So make the mind pure. Pray to God with earnestness and you will succeed."

Speaking of Brahmacharya, Swamiji was put in mind of the great Brahmacharin and Bhakta Hanuman. The thought moved him to warmth of feeling and he proceeded:

'What is the power of Yogin compared to the Virya of a Bhakta like Hanuman, the greatest and wisest of Brahmacharins? At one bound he crossed the ocean! The Lord Himself had to build a bridge to reach Lanka. See what power he had! Did he practise this sort of Yoga? Was it any Yoga-siddhi or was it Premabhakti?

"Rama, with Sita was seated on the throne after his coronation. All his brothers and Bhaktas—Hanuman included—were in attendance. He was distributing costly presents to all his followers. Hanuman's turn came last. Rama took the most precious garland of pearls which adorned his own breast and gave it to Hanuman.

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"How can this unpolished monkey appreciate this gift?" thought Lakshmana. As if in consonance with that thought Hanuman began to bite and break the pearls one by one and after looking into them throw them away as worthless. Lakshmana's blood began to boil. Rama noted it and asked him to question Hanuman what his strange conduct meant. To Lakshmana's question Hanuman replied. "Why! I am looking for Rama in these pearls; and not finding him I am throwing them away. Where there is no Rama, there is no worth. I don't care to keep it.' Then, with a sneer, Lakshmana asked: "Why then do you keep your body? Does it contain Rama?"

"At once in the presence of that august assembly, before Rama and Sita, Hanuman ripped open his breast and said 'Look and behold!' And Lo! there in the lotus of his big heart was seen seated the self-same Rama with Sita in all his Divine splendour."

Swamiji had suited action to the words and as he narrated it, his audience saw not the Swami, but Hanuman, and in the bared breast of Swami they seemed actually to behold Rama and Sita. So completely had the Swami transformed himself and became one with Hanuman, that all Hanuman's love suffused through Swamiji's person; tears trickled down his cheeks; he was overpowered by a rare feeling. As soon as he came to realise that the heart's treasure had been revealed, he got up, hurried to his room and shut the door. After a long while he came back, shedding peace and benignity. And he quietly said 'Sri Swamiji (Vivekananda) is the modern Hanuman. Don't you know, before going to the West he wrote to the Holy Mother that he felt like Mahavira going to Lanka with the ring, the Message of his Master?"

What ocean of Love tossing up mighty waves was there in his large and mighty heart. And how rarely did the fortunate few catch a glimpse of one of those waves. While he was taking Swami Brahmanandaji to

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Kerala, one of the party was Kumudabandhu Sen, an old devotee who knew the Swami from the Baranagore days. They were travelling in the same compartment. "We talked of the old days of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda', said Mr. Sen, 'and when we were alone he sang a song about Radhakrishna composed by Girish Ghosh. Singing with great fervour and devotion, tears began to flow profusely from his eyes. I wondered that a man of such great control as I knew him to be, could be so full of devotion as not to be able to suppress his tears of joy."

Spending a few months in Trivandrum and giving an impetus to the work in all its phases, the Swami left the place for Malabar on the 26th of Oct. 1917. By the year 1917, in the words of Mr. Kunhiraman Menon, "Swamiji had come to know where to concentrate and where not in his work in Malabar. Tellicherry, one of the three important towns, he liked and continued to visit almost every year, but the conditions there were such that he did not expect any tangible and permanent results. Calicut, he saw as dominated by the commercial spirit, where religion either would not grow or would grow but slowly. Yet it being the centre and the head-quarters of the District, he wished to do something there. Not finding, however, the right man for the time being, he postponed the work and waited for propitious days. They came later on. Palghat, another important town, appeared to him as dry as dust. Ottapalam, he liked from the very beginning, after two or three visits he remarked that he scented an Ashrama there just as a hound would scent a game. He visited these and many other places in Malabar." Wherever he went he left an indelible impression which in course of time wrought a permanent change in the lives of many. Everywhere he was received with great enthusiasm. But nowhere was it more markedly displayed than in North Malabar, where he visited Ryroth, the family house of the great Poet Kuttamath, four miles up the Mahe River. His arrival there from Mahe by boat was always timed at the hour

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of dusk and he was always received with royal pomp, caparisoned elephants, illumination, fire works and all other paraphernalia. The head of the house, Mr. Krishna Kurup, was, strange to say, not in the least interested in religion. He could not understand it, he said. It was not as a religious man and Sanyasin that he honoured and loved Swamiji. Himself a bold, upright and a highly intelligent man of great business capacity, initiative and power of direction he saw in the Swami the perfection of those manly qualities which he loved and admired most. Though he was not religiously inclined, this contact with Swamiji awakened the religious spirit and emboldened his younger brother, Kesava Kurup, to leave the house all on a sudden without informing any one."

Finishing the round of visits in Kerala he returned to Bangalore by the end of the year. The activities of the Bangalore Ashrama were being extended and carried on regularly. The religious classes, weekly bhajanas, celebrations of Birthdays and other religious festivals, went on as usual. At all times Swamiji was keeping himself in touch with all the important centres and the prominent devotees. He had a large volume of correspondence to attend to. To acknowledge and reply to all letters was an invariable rule with him. He had to do it all himself. It speaks volumes for his character that, to the very last, he kept up the school boy's hand,—neat, round and beautiful ; each letter in each word was perfectly legible. Neither age nor overwork did affect it in the least.

The next year again he set out on his tours. The annual visits became a regular feature in his programme. Refreshing and nourishing as the monsoon showers were his visits. This year he visited Coorg also, attended the Birthday Celebration at Quilandy and some other centres and by the time he reached Quilon, he felt so tired and worn out that he returned to Bangalore via Madras in the month of June. In September again he visited

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Trivandrum. He invited Dr. Tampi and family to spend the Christmas at Bangalore. Dr. Tampi accepted the invitation. The Doctor was never tired of describing the Swami's love and solicitude for the comfort of his guests, what an ideal host he was. This has been testified to by one and all who had the good fortune to be the Swami's guests at one time or another. Swami Yatiswarananda once said that it was from the Swami that he learnt what hospitality was. With his own hands, without the help of any cook, the Swami prepared coffee for his guests. He knew their likes and dislikes and prepared dishes to suit their tastes. He did not talk of or lecture on Atithi Puja. He set an example to the householders and Sanyasins as well, as to how they should treat their guests. Hospitality was in his very blood. How the young disciples of the Master met at his house and how they were entertained by the members of his family have already been touched upon. For two months he got on without a cook or even a dish-washer. But he did not allow that to interfere with his other works.

He left Bangalore in the month of May 1919. One notable event in this tour was the retaking of Mr.Sankara Warrier, B.A., into the Hindu fold. He had become a Christian but desired to be re-admitted to the Hindu Community. Swamiji was approached by Mr. Warrier. He had the proper ceremonies with Vedic rites and he was taken back. This time his visit extended up to Mangalore in South Canara. He halted at important centres. He also laid the foundation stone for the Ashrama at Salem on the site donated by Mr. B. V. Namagiry Iyer on 13th June 1919 and returned to Bangalore.

On the 3rd of August a students' home was opened at Bangalore providing free lodging, boarding and religious instructions to about 13 students attending schools. Some of the boarders attended the National Culture Institute. Swamiji had parallel and horizontal bars put up at the Ashrama itself and he was personally instructing the students in physical exercises. He was also doing kitchen work. On the 12th August he wrote as follows ;

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"As regards the request of the lady Bhaktas of Ottapalam, I am very sorry that at present and in the near future there is hardly any possibility of my getting out of Bangalore. The reason is this: For nearly three months we have no cooks here. We are only two Swamies. One is conducting worship morning and evening, besides doing all outdoor works, such as marketing, shopping and various other duties of the Ashrama, too many to mention. I am myself doing all the works of the kitchen such as cooking, dressing, cleaning, etc., from 8 A.M., to 12 noon and again from 7 P.M., to 9 P.M., daily * * * I hardly find any time even to drop a few lines in reply to so many letters that I receive every day and further, now, in Calcutta influenza fever, famine, floods and various other disturbances such as looting, etc. are rampant and as such, it is not advisable that a party of ladies should travel over there. Write to them clearly. Explain the whole situation and reasons. It is not that I am unwilling, but the present circumstances do not permit me to leave Bangalore. Cannot write any more. Quite tired."

It was in October that Mr. Kesava Kurup, the brother of his host at Ryroth near Mahe, left the house for North India. Swamiji only heard of it. He thought of the old Mother, her grief and anxiety. He at once wrote to Bhaktan (Purushotamananda): "You write to his old mother on my behalf, with my blessings that there is no cause for anxiety. Sri Gurumaharaj will bring him back to his house before long. He had a keen desire to visit the Belur Math and pay his respects to the President Maharaj, and I believe that goaded him to take this trip". It came out as Swamiji guessed and predicted. He returned soon after getting initiation from President Maharaj. Of course, Swamiji wrote to Belur all about him.

By the end of October Swamiji got a cook and felt much relieved. Early next year (1920) he reached Travancore halting, on his way, at Salem, Ottapalam and

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other centres. After staying some days in Trivandrum he visited Haripad, where he spent about a week. Instructing the Bhaktas and training the Brahmacharins was his main work there. Regarding worship, he impressed upon the minds of the Brahmacharins that worship was not dry ritualism, but feeling the presence of the Lord and serving him as one would serve one's object of love. He stressed again and again on the need of practicality. He taught them even cooking and domestic economy and how to make the best and most out of what little was available. Some times, when the disciples were preparing to go to the market to purchase vegetables, Swamiji would say: "Wait, let me see what vegetables you have in your garden at this moment'. He would then go round the garden and collect many things, green leaves included. He would himself cut them for varieties of curries: "See,' all this was here and yet you wanted to spend money in the market for these or other inferior things", he would say. Another time he forcibly pointed out the evil of fault-finding. "Why should you consider yourself as good and satwic and the others as of baser stuff. Are they also not the children of God? We must pray for them. Never wound any one's feelings even though you are to be open and straightforward at all times." By words as well as by example he held up the ideal of love and boldness, strength and samesightedness. Even to those who were impure, his message and advice was one of hope and strength. Think this way, he said, 'If I am very impure, that gives me all the more right to call upon my Mother, that is all the more reason why she should come to my help. Feel that you are the Mother's child.'

How he enabled the devotees and Brahmacharins to get over deep-rooted caste prejudices is illustrated by an incident. Swamiji, the Brahmacharin at Haripad (Brahmin by birth) and others were returning from Cherthala to Haripad. They had provided nothing for dinner. When Swamiji came to know of it, he rebuked them severely and ordered them to stop the boat near a

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bridge where he noticed a few dirty shops. Swamiji got down. Rice cake baked by a Muhammedan woman and jaggery water stored by a Tiyya were all the provisions there. Swamiji had a little of both purchased. The cakes were tied up in the Brahmacharin's upper cloth. Coming to the boat, Swamiji asked the Brahmacharin to eat the cakes and to drink the water, while he himself fasted that night. The Brahmacharin's caste prejudice was completely broken. He insisted on all Brahmacharins having their own water pots and beddings. 'Using another's bedding destroys Virya, he said. He also showed them by example how to avoid useless talks and vain disputes. In the course of these journeys in the interior of the villages, they happened to go to a Warrier's house. The Warrier asked if Swami knew English or Sanskrit. The Swamiji made him understand that he did not know anything and that he was a poor Fakir going about to earn his bread. He gave a somewhat similar reply to a Christian Missionary—a fellow passenger travelling to Quilandy.

As usual, he visited all the old centres in Travancore and Malabar, renewing old and forming new contacts, tending, nourishing and incessantly adding to his flock.

CHAPTER XXI.

SOMBRE SHADOWS: BEREAVEMENTS.

By this time the Holy Mother had fallen ill and was confined to bed. Her condition grew worse. Fearing the worst, Swamiji started for Calcutta. The Mother was in her last stages. The Light was gradually flickering; at last it went out. How Swamiji grieved! How dearly, devoutly, he had loved Her. When she travelled in a conveyance, he walked by its side, stick in hand; he, the President, of the Bangalore Ashrama, carried

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Her puja materials on his head; he, the apostle of strength, sobbed and wept like a child when she was leaving Bangalore to Madras. He might have felt the need for some solace. He visited holy Benares, the favourite city of his boyhood. Then the remaining object of his great love and adoration, the Swami Brahmananda, was away at Bhuvaneswar. Swamiji decided to visit him. He went there, made his pranamas to Maharaj and drew consolation from him. Some days later he came to Bangalore. On 22nd September 1920 he wrote to Bhaktan:

"I returned here only 3 days ago. I was laid up with fever and influenza at Bhuvaneswar. I am better now, but very weak. The President Maharaj said that the lady Bhaktas should wait till December next. He will then come over to Madras and then they can come to see him. He is not in good health. If he comes to Madras in winter, it will be every way convenient for all of them to come to Madras and see him."

That the President Maharaj was coming so near as Madras was an opportunity too good to be lost by the people of Kerala. The Swami pointed it out to the Bhaktas. In a letter to Mr. M. R. Narayana Pillay, dated Bangalore, 29th October 1920 the Swami wrote:

"The Madras Students' Home building is nearing its completion. Our friends over there are very keen to have the new home opened by our President Maharaj. The opening ceremony will most probably take place in the beginning of the next year. So, they propose to bring him over there either in December or January next. The President Maharaj told me that he would come over to Bangalore to spend the summer after the opening ceremony was over. I suggested to Mr. Tampi and others that if we could, in the meanwhile, finish the building of our Trivandrum Mutt, we would have it blessed and opened by him. It is a rare opportunity that we can hardly afford to lose. So discuss the matter, please, with all our interested friends at your earliest convenience. I got a letter from Mr. Tampi some time

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ago. He writes to say that he is very busy making arrangements in connection with the Governor's visit. I think it is all over now and you can conveniently arrange a day in the near future to meet all together and discuss the question. The President Maharaj is ageing and is in consequence growing less and less strong. If we lose this opportunity, I dare say, there would be very little probability of his visiting this side again. I shall be very anxiously looking forward to the result of your discussion in the matter * * *".

The result of the discussion was to seize the opportunity and to request the President Maharaj to open the Ashrama and bless it. Construction work was therefore pushed on vigorously.

The President came to Madras with Swami Shivanandaji, and others. Two Brahmacharins from Haripad had proceeded to Madras to pay their respects to him. A few days afterwards Swamiji also went there to pay them his respects. On the day of Swamiji's coming, Maharaj asked the two Brahmacharins to wait outside to receive their Guru. He had arranged for a car being sent to the Railway Station to convey Swamiji. Not being satisfied with all these, Maharaj himself issued forth some time before Swamiji's arrival and remained pacing up and down the garden to be the first to greet his beloved and devoted Tulasi. What infinite love! Swamiji approached him with offerings of fruits, etc. and fell down at his feet and was received most affectionately.

Maharaj opened the Madras Students' Home and reached Bangalore where he had decided to spend the summer. The Swami was glad beyond measure. He was given another opportunity to serve him. As before, he was engrossed in service; for the time being, he had no other aim in life than to see that Maharaj was happy. His routine of work in those days has been described by an eye-witness. Early morning the Swami would open Sri Maharaji's room, make pranamas, take the dust of his feet and enquire as to whether he had slept well and how his health was. Then he would ask, 'Maharaj, what will

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you take to-day ?' Maharaj would reply ' Whatever you give me, I shall gladly take.' Then the Swami would rejoin ' I wish to offer what you like best, Maharaj and take your prasad.' Maharaj would smile benignly on him. After attending on Maharaj in the morning, the Swami would himself go to the market, purchase the best available things and carry them to the Ashrama himself, and cook the daintiest dishes for Maharaj and all the other members of the party. He would himself annoint Maharaj with oil and wash him and then, after serving Maharaj with food, he would take his Prasad. Swamiji's face would be suffused with great tenderness and humility when he approached and talked with Sri Maharaj. ' He belongs to the type of the old Rishis ', he once said of Maharaj ' and you should approach him with deep devotion and humility. Maharaji's love and regard for Swamiji was such that he often advised devotees to go and hear what Swami Nirmalanandaji was saying. That will do you good ', he would say. He was also so considerate as not to go by the front door while Swamiji was discussing there, lest he should be disturbed, but went out another way to take his usual walk.

One day Maharaj told him ' Brother, I hear that you go to the market and carry things to the Ashrama yourself in the sun. And you attend not only on me but on every one of the party. Why should you take all this unnecessary trouble on yourself ?' Swamiji replied 'What Maharaj, is it a trouble ? It is my good fortune that I am privileged to serve you to this little extent. Pray don't be worried over it. Let me be happy and make the best use of this opportunity.' Maharaj would then look on him with infinite tenderness and love. Days passed in this way. Maharaj consented to go to Trivandrum and open the Ashrama. The news was communicated to the devotees in Malabar. Mr. K. Sankara Menon (Swami Amalananda) wrote to the Swami inviting the party to Ottapalam. Accepting the invitation the Swami wrote to him :—

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Bangalore City.
Dated 25th July 1921.

My dear Sankara Menon,

Many many thanks for your very kind letter of the 18th instant, and also for your kind invitation. We shall very likely start from here for Travancore by the first week of September next. We shall certainly be very happy to halt at Ottapalam on our way for a couple of days and enjoy your kind hospitality. The date of our starting is not definitely settled. I shall be very glad to intimate to you in time as to when and by what train the President Maharaj and party would arrive at Ottapalnm * * ".

Yours affectionately,
Nirmalananda.

Again in reply to Mr. Sankara Menon, he wrote to him as follows :—

Bangalore.
7th Sept. 1921.

My dear Sankara Menon,

Many thanks for your kind letter of the 3rd instant. The President Maharaj x x x will stay here till the end of this month and then he will go over to Madras to spend the Navaratri days. If by that time the disturbance in Malabar (the Mopla rebellion) is quieted down, he will go to Travancore via Ottapalam ; but if the present state of affairs continues for another month, he will have to take the other route via Madura, and then on his way back he will take the Shoranur line and halt at Ottapalam x x ."

The Swami wrote to his friends and devotees in Travancore regarding the arrangemenrs to be made there. Every effort was made to make the journey and stay of Maharaj quite comfortable and the function an unprecedented success. But Maharaji's indisposition caused the programme to be altered. On the 28th of September, the Swami wrote to Mr. Sankara Menon,

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"The President Maharaj being indisposed and also on account of the Mopla disturbance, he has, for the present, postponed his trip to Ottapalam. He will go over that side after the Navaratri festival is over. I shall timely inform you as to the date of his departure later on'

Before Maharaj left for Madras for Navaratri the Swami had written to Mr. Kunhiraman Menon to look up the arrangements made at Ottapalam and go to Bangalore so that he might give further instructions in person as to what remained to be done. Mr. Menon went there. Maharaj was glad to meet him and asked him "Kunhiraman, when we go to Malabar, will you arrange a nice bungalow for us?" 'Yes, Maharaj' he replied, "everything has been made ready. Only thou hast to come there." 'Very well,' said Maharaj and then, pointing to a side room (Swami Baradananda was there) and with a playful smile he said, "Go and tell him that you will give him nice things to eat." Was it mere fun and playfulness or was it not also a novel method of teaching 'beware of attachment to nice things, however innocent they look! Pleasures are snares, beware and discriminate!'

Mr. Menon received instructions from Swamiji and took leave of Swamiji and Maharaj from both of whom he had the assurance that Ottapalam would be visited. The final words of Mahapurushji, however, were: "If it be the will of God, we shall come."

That very day, the Swami requested Sri Maharaj to give Sanyas to Brahmachari Santa Chaitanya. That was done the next morning and Santa was given the name Sukhananda. Brahmachari Veeresh (Swami Shambhavananda) was also given Brahmacharya initiation that day.

The party left for Madras. After the Navaratri puja which was performed there in a grand scale and in the Bengali fashion, something or other made

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Maharaj change his mind. He decided to proceed to Calcutta forthwith and the trip to Kerala stood cancelled.

Swamiji was never so disappointed in all his life. All the high hopes of himself and the hundreds of devotees and all the careful and elaborate arrangements made in Kerala were dashed to pieces at a stroke. Soon after he came to Kerala, news reached him at Trivandrum that Sri Maharaj was indisposed. He came to Ottapalam. On the 10th April, 1922 he received a wire from Bangalore intimating that Maharaji's condition was declared hopeless. Immediately he started for Calcutta. At the Railway Station another wire: 'Saradananda wires, Maharaj entered Mahasamadhi, 9 Monday night' was handed over to him. He read the heart-rending news. Calm and grave, he said "now let us get back" and returned. He reached the house of his host (Mr. V. K. Narayanan Nair), threw himself into his easy chair, uttered the Mother's name and burst into tears. Very soon he composed himself. He gave up the idea of proceeding to Calcutta and decided to return to Trivandrum. The disciples of Maharaj were instructed what they should do in connection with the Mahasamadhi and Swamiji left Ottapalam the next day. He stayed two weeks in Trivandrum where after offering special puja and feeding a large number of the poor he went back to Bangalore.

CHAPTER XXII.

NO REST.

Towards the end of the year 1922 Swamiji visited Coimbatore on the invitation of Mr Karunakara Menon who was the Sub-Registrar of Assurances at Badagara

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at the time of Swamiji's visit to that place in 1912. From there he came to Malabar, visited all the old centres and went back to Bangalore on the 2nd January 1923.

According to the request of the bhaktas at Quilandy, the Swami consented to preside over the Birthday celebrations there on the 30th of March. There was also a legal matter in connection with the Ashrama. Besides the compound and garden which contained the Ashrama building, there was another garden which had also been given over to the Mission. The landlord of the garden wanted to recover possession of it and had sent a registered notice demanding surrender. Swamiji asked Mr. Kunhiraman Menon to settle the matter out of Court and he also wrote to the Brahmachari: "If it is the Will of Sri Gurumaharaj, everything will come off all right. If not we quit the place and we shall try to start a centre at Ottapalam or Pattambi.' Swamiji came and presided over the functions. Quilandy was a centre from which Swamiji could and did, by his visits, year after year, extend his influence and contacts with the devotees throughout North Malabar and South Canara. He was invited by and was the guest of the Second Raja of Kadathanad at his Purameri Palace more than once. The Raja is a descendent of the old Kshatriya Kings who ruled over North Malabar. Both the Raja and his consort were much attached to the Swami.

He also visited Coonoor on invitation by the Chempolly brothers of Ottapalam who were running the Coonoor Central Stores. There was also a proposal to acquire a site for an Ashrama there. While there, a body of panchamas came to the Swami to pay their respects. He was gracious enough to visit their village and temple where he was agreeably surprised to see the photos of Sri Gurumaharaj and Swami Vivekananda. The Swami also gave them some religious instructions.

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Quite a new place visited by the Swamiji this year was Gobichettipalayam, in the Coimbatore District. Mr. T. V. Krishnan Nair (Retired Judge) was the District Munsiff of the place. He had been introduced to the Swami by Mr. Kunhiraman Menon sometime ago while he was District Munsiff in Malabar. Swamiji was invited to preside over the Annual Celebrations of the local Vivekananda Society. Mr. Menon who had delivered a lecture there the previous year was also invited to deliver another lecture on the occasion. "The audience" writes Mr. Menon "was greatly impressed with the Presidential address and the precise answers to questions solving all their difficulties. Although the Swami left the place pleased with the enthusiasm of the workers of the society and the hospitality of his good host, he expressed to me on our return journey that he did not entertain much hopes about the future of the society as * * no work could be done without a fair amount of pecuniary support."

From Gobichettipalayam he went to Kerala. After visiting the centres in Malabar and accepting the invitation of several bhaktas, he proceeded to Trivandrum where the Ashrama work was nearing completion. From there again he returned to Bangalore on the 15th of June.

What strikes even a very superficial observer as wonderful is the Swami's travels. How frequent, how long, how wide they were! What power of endurance and adaptability it demanded of him! Heat or cold, wind or rain, day or night, he was almost always on the move. Rarely was any trip a comfortable journey in the Second Class. We have seen how he surprised the Haripad Bhaktas by his travelling alone and passing a night in a third class compartment and returning the balance passage money to them. Strange places, strange faces, strange language, strange and unaccustomed diet which was often unpalatable and unsuited to his constitution, none of these stood in the way of

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his carrying on the work of his Master. He lived as he actually expressed: "Let Sri Gurumaharaj's Will be done. I am to work and obey His Command to my last breath. No question, no flinching. Absolute submission. Wah Guru Ki Fateh !....." He had no rest anywhere. He went to give something, to spend his own energies in the task of uplifting others. Like his great chief, he also was overdrawing his draft. Nature protested.

Towards the end of the year 1923 he went to Kerala, put himself under the treatment of Dr. Tampi and recovered his health. At the same time he attended to the work of the Ashrama building. To his great sorrow the designer of the building, his personal friend and devotee who had worked heart and soul to make the building stately and strong, Mr. Hrishikesh Banerjee, passed away before its completion. Swamiji himself continued to supervise the work. The progress, though slow, was satisfactory. He saw that the Ashrama could be opened early next year. The door of the shrine room and the throne he wished to be made artistically. It took months to make them according to his design and he was pleased with the work.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FIRE OF SANYASA LIGHTED IN KERALA.

Swamiji's thoughts now turned to the young men who had of their own accord left their homes and taken shelter at his feet. They had worked hard and served the cause all these years. Several of them desired to take up Sanyasa formally. The practice till then was for the President of the Belur Mutt to give Mantra-Deeksha or Sanyasa. While the President Maharaj, Swami Brahmanandaji was in Bangalore last time he had told the Swami that devotees need not be

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sent up to him for initiation, and that the Swami himself might give it. To take upon one's shoulders the whole life burden, the aggregate of the age-long karmas of another was a responsibility at which several perfected ones shuddered and which they quietly shirked or tried to avoid. It is well known how Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna himself had to suffer for taking up the responsibilities of many, how some of his immediate disciples were reluctant to initiate disciples and how discriminative they were in their choice of disciples. But to the large loving heart of Swamiji any such feeling was foreign and repugnant. It knew no fear either in this world or the next. He, the free, was commissioned to go from place to place and help all out of darkness. And here were his own children who had clung to him forgetting themselves from the very beginning. He decided to take all their burden upon himself, to give them Sanyasa. They may have many faults and weaknesses. No such thought or vision deterred him from following his own path. He may have to suffer the consequences, what of that? Was he not the true son and follower of Him who bore the Cross for the sake of man?

On the 22nd of December 1923 were gathered eleven Brahmacharins at the Ashrama at Haripad The occasion was unique. That was the first house of God in Kerala where God's children could feel themselves perfectly at home, free from the shackles of social customs, where they could mix with one another in joy and fearlessness; that was the first occasion when, in the history of all Kerala, birth did not debar a man from entering the freedom of the last Ashrama of life; that was the first occasion again when a child of the Prince of Tyagis lit the literal fire of renunciation in Kerala when the perfected one spoke of his own state and experience.

To raise their minds to a higher level, to make them fully conscious of the greatness of the step they

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were going to take, the Swami asked the Brahmacharins to speak on Sanyasa. After they had spoken, Swamiji who was in an exalted mood spoke a few burning words. "Real Sanyasa is not giving up, it is taking in. Instead of a few acres of land and other finite things, the Sanyasin takes the whole universe as his heritage. He who was the son of man becomes the child of God. In exchange for a small family of men, he gets the entire creation as his relations. It is not also a flying away from misery. That befits only a coward. It is daring to see God and Bliss in everything. The Sanyasin gets the vision of God and lives in perpetual joy, conveying peace and happiness to all."

In the auspicious Brahma Muhurta, the next day, the eleven Brahmacharins duly performed the Viraja Homa under the directions of the Swamiji and took the vow of Sanyasa according to Vedic rites; they were given Kashaya robes and new names by Swamiji. They are: Swamis Chitsukhananda; Nirvikarananda; Niranjanananda; Sekharananda; Chidambarananda; Naishtikananda; Chitprabhananda; Chitbhasananda; Subbrananda; Vageeswarananda; and Dheeswarananda. After the ceremony was over Swamiji said to a visitor devotee "I have merely entrusted them to Sri Gurumaharaj. They have been dedicated to him. I have no more concern with them. Sri Gurumaharaj will lead them." How true! Again he said 'I am a mere tool'. Regarding his teaching work he used to say: 'I am a mere gramaphone, reproducing the ideas of great minds. Swami Vivekananda was the great pipe through which the ideas of Sri Gurumaharaj flowed. We are all small pipes fitted for the same purpose.'

After the initiation some of the disciples were discussing as to how the new Sanyasins were to live in the world. Swamiji overheard them and said: "Be like the postmen. Haven't you seen the postman delivering letters? The letters may be very important, but the post man who delivers them is not considered an

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important person. You are to deliver the ideas of Gurumaharaj and Swamiji. Be their postmen, give out the ideas, not as teachers but as delivery peons.'

Regarding food he said, let what you take be anything. If you use your energy for good purposes, your food will become satwic. Otherwise even good food becomes tamasic.

Swamiji left Kerala for Bangalore via Coonoor. This time also he visited all the Kerala centres. In Bangalore he gave Sanyasa to two Brahmacharins and named them Deshikananda and Shambhavananda.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN MEMORIUM.

The most important and urgent work then was the opening of the Trivandrum Ashrama.

It took seven years to complete the Ashrama building, a magnificient granite structure, situated on a retired hill-top commanding extensive views of inspiring landscapes on three sides.

"So much money need not have been spent on the building", observed Sir Puttanna Chetty of Mysore who visited the Ashrama while Swamiji was in Bangalore. "The Ashrama is finely situated and commands a very charming view, but so much money need not have been spent on the building. A smaller building costing much less would have been sufficient. The surplus amount collected could have been invested for carrying on the work of the institution." These words of his were reported to the Swamiji. His comment was: "Yes, yes, men are of different views. A pucca granite building in the name of Sri Gurumaharaj will stand for years and will serve as a source of inspiration and means of spreading his ideas to many. Do you

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not see the grand old temples in South India? They remain intact to this day, while hundreds of smaller ones have all perished. Don't think that the Ancients were wasting money on temples. That also has its use.

"Further, I do not want to make the Sadhus Babus. If they find the Ashrama well endowed, they naturally turn Babus and become victims to the evils of wealth. That is why I did not try to provide funds for future management. The Sadhus must lead ideal lives and command the hearty support of the people and then the institution will run smoothly. If they are unfit and fail to get such support let them starve."

The plan of the work was elaborate and many thousands of rupees were spent upon it. Thanks to friends and sympathisers and the indefatigable exertions of the Swami, the construction of the main building was completed in March 1924. The consecration was fixed for the 7th of March, the 89th Birthday Anniversary of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. The ceremony was imposing. Early that day, Bhaktas flocked from all parts of the land and spiritual fervour permeated the atmosphere. At the appointed hour, amidst prayer and music the Swami within closed doors solemnly installed the portraits of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Brahmananda on the altar prepared in the worship room. The doors were then opened and he performed the arati. All those who wanted to worship at the feet of the Lord were allowed to do so. Vedic Homa was also performed. The festival continued up to Sunday the 16th March, when the Ashrama was publicly opened in the presence of a large gathering. At the meeting held in the evening, the Swami presided and delivered a stirring speech in the course of which he referred to the munificence of Mr. Kulakkunnath Raman Menon in constructing the worship room floored with marble slabs in memory of his patron, A. R. Raja-

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raja Varma, and sinking a well in the Ashrama compound in memory of his deceased mother. He also referred to the sacrifice worthy of record, of a poor woman who, having nothing else to give, sent her nose-ring as her offering for the worthy cause. The Swami dedicated the Ashrama to the memory of Swami Brahmananda, the spiritual son of Sri Ramakrishna.

Just after the installation of the Ashrama at Trivandrum, the Prabuddha Keralam Office (the Vernacular Organ of the Centre) had to be shifted to another place. The late lamented P. G. Govinda Pillai (Sirkar Vakil), who had fought many an intellectual battle with the Swami and had at last become deeply convinced and devoted, gladly placed a garden and building of his in Alleppey at the disposal of the Swami. The P. K. Office was transferred and Sri Ramakrishna was installed there by Swamiji in June of that year. The Swami dedicated the Ashrama to the memory of Swami Yogananda.

Coming under the influence of this Ashrama, certain Bhaktas of the fishermen caste of the neighbouring village founded a Sri Ramakrishna Chaithanya Math and began to conduct Bhagavat-seva regularly. They too invited the Swami. He was so pleased with their work and devotion that he heartily invoked the blessings of Bhagavan on them.

It was here that the Swami had the great devotee, Seth Khatawoo Khimjee, who supplied thousands of rupees worth of coir mats to several Ashramas in Kerala, Bangalore and Calcutta.

In this trip the Swami also laid the foundation for the Ashrama at Muttom. It was formally opened on the Paurnima day in October 1925 and named Prema nanda Ashrama in memory of one of the great Iswara-koti disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

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CHAPTER XXV.

VIVIFYING THE NORTH.

The passing away of Sri Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) marks an epoch in the history of the Ramakrishna Mission. He was the Raja (King) of the Brotherhood by divine right. An object of adoration to one and all—his gurubhais included—he did not govern or manage the Mission and its members; he gave no orders; his personality permeated and enveloped all. He was the Soul, which animated the organization.

After him, it was Mahapurushaji, Swami Shivanandaji who became the President of the Ramakrishna Mission. He had decided to visit South India once more. He went to Madras and from there to the Nilgiris. Two of Swamiji's devotees, the Chempollee Brothers, were there at that time. They met Mahapurushaji. He was graciously pleased to initiate them. Accepting their invitation he also visited their residence. When going upstairs he saw a life-size photo of Swamiji on the wall, he exclaimed 'Tulasi Maharaj has already come' and he lovingly touched the photo. Swamiji was very glad that the brothers were blessed by Mahapurushji. On the 1st of July 1924 he wrote to the younger brother: "Very glad to receive your letter and to learn that Mahapurushji has blessed you and that he very kindly took his bhiksha at your place with the other Swamis. I am also glad to be told that the site over there was duly and properly inspected by the authorities and that your brother will, later on, send us the detailed information of the same. x x x Convey my love and sashtangas to Sri Mahapurushji when you visit him after receiving this."

Mahapurushji reached Bangalore on the 28th of July. It was at that time that Kerala experienced

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heavy floods which brought on great distress and loss of property. Swamiji immediately sent Swamis Sukhananda and Deshikananda for flood relief work in Travancore. The inmates of the Alleppey and Trivandrum Ashramas also joined in the work which lasted for six months. A sum of Rs. 20,000 was distributed among the destitute.

About this time Swamiji had a call from Sri Saradananda and he went to Calcutta, in August 1924. From that time till May 1925, for 10 months he was in Upper India, while almost all the time the President, Mahapurushaji, was in the South. During the 10 months' sojourn in North India the Swami did magnificient work.

As usual he was ever active and constantly on the move from centre to centre, awakening pure souls, inspiring and charging them with spirituality, quenching their thirst for religion and blessing them all. In fact he became a Dharma Megha (spiritual rain-cloud), raining love, light and peace. He made innumerable new friends, devotees and disciples, this time.

He visited Patna, Chapra, Benares, Sewan, Dacca, Mymensingh, Dinajpur, Comilla and various other parts of East Bengal. Many of these places he visited more than once and in all of them he distributed his accumulated spiritual power profusely. Till the end of 1935 he visited them every year. He lived with his devotees or in the Ashramas or Maths, if any there were, in those places. Wherever he was, he attracted large crowds to have his darsan, to listen to his illuminating talks and to derive peace and solace from his advice and instructions.

From Calcutta he proceeded to Benares halting at Patna and Chapra on his way. It was at Patna that Sjs. Bibhuti Ranjan Ghosh, Shambhu Barhmeswar Prasad, Nandipati Mukherji, Umachandra Sen Muzumdar, Panchanana Chatterjee, Shanker Mouli-datta, Prabodh Roy Chowdhuri, Jivan Kumar Acharya,

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Prabodh Chandra Chatterjee and others met him Rai Saheb Bhiman Bihari Basu had met him for the first time at Bangalore. During most of his visits to Patna he was the guest of Nandipati Mukherjee, and at Chapra he was invariably the guest of Krishna Chandra Dutt It is not only the individuals above mentioned, but the members of their families also became Swami's devotees and disciples. Whether in the North or in the South children were his special favourites. He used to play with them, fondle them, tell them interesting stories, give them presents and care for them as a mother or a father would do, teach them the Kintergarten of religion and unconsciously mould their tendencies and lead them higher and higher. He had his eyes more on the future generation than on the present. To them he was not a teacher of spirituality but simply their beloved friend, playmate and protector. Not the children alone, but many adults also who either could not or did not take interest in religion, loved him with all their heart, because of the love he bore them, because of his selflessness, of his simplicity, straightforwardness and dexterity in everything he did. Generally, whoever looked upon him saw in him their friend and guide. The poor, the weak and the helpless had his special love. Most undemonstrative, he was always relieving distress, unasked, unobserved and unknown. He was supporting many a poor student and many a poor family and he was comforting all in times of anxiety or distress. His observing eyes, and helping hands were everywhere and upon all.

It was in 1924 that Swamiji stayed at Patna for the first time and thereafter he visited it many times and he had very many disciples there. On his first visit, several gentlemen met him. He stayed there for a few days, went to Benares and soon returned to Patna itself. As soon as he got down from the car at the gate of the local Ashrama, his eyes fell upon Professor Nandipati Mukherjee and he at once said: "I

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have come for you." Mr. Mukherjee understood what he meant and took initiation from him.

When Shambhu Barhmeswar Prasad prayed for initiation while at Patna, he was asked by Swamiji to go to Benares. Mr. Prasad went there alone. Swamiji then told him : " You are a house-holder, you should be initiated along with your wife." Mr. Prasad went back and brought his wife also to Benares. It is not the practice for any to give Mantra within the limits of Holy Kashi—the Lord Shiva alone being the Teacher and Liberator there. Swamiji, therefore, took them outside those limits and gave them Mantras.

Sreemati Annapurna Devi (wife of the late Rajani Kanta Mukherjee, Deputy Magistrate, Sewan) was very anxious to get Mantra from a proper guru. She visited many good Sadhus, but was not satisfied with any. At last one day in the hot midsummer sun, she started for the Ramakrishna Adwaita Ashrama, Benares. Reaching the Ashrama she saw Swamiji sitting there and at once she decided within herself that she should take initiation from him. Swamiji received her very cordially as if she were known to him from a very long time. He initiated her outside the limits of the Holy Kashi.

Sj. Dheerendranath Dutt, nephew of Kiran Chandra Dutt, M.R.A.S., begged of Swami for Mantra. Swamiji declined to give him Mantra within the limits of Kashi, On his behalf Bibhuti Babu of Bankura also requested Swamiji, but he would not listen. " On the third night of his stay with me," writes Mr. Dutt, ' I dreamt that I was being called by Maharaj for Mantradeeksha and my heart leapt with joy. To my utter surprise in the early hours of the morning I was actually called by him. Almost all the inmates of the house were still asleep. He directed me to take my bath and to prepare myself for deeksha. Feeling happy and at the same time astounded for a while, I hurriedly took my bath and followed him into the room where he used to

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take rest. I found that he had already collected flowers from our garden, and some fruits which visitors had offered to him were also kept ready there. I took my seat and Swamiji blessed me giving me my Ishta-mantra. He would not take any gurudakshina. He laughed and asked me to take one fruit in my hand and to give it as gurudakshina. I obeyed him. After a while, the sun rose and the visitors began to come in. Dr. Khandalwal, who had like myself asked for Mantram and who had been given the same reply, also came in. Guru maharaj called him into the room and he was also favoured with Deeksha then and there."

At Patna Mr. T.—a brother of one of Swamiji's disciples, requested Swamiji to initiate him. Swamiji refused. Thereupon the Swamis of the local Ashrama and others interceded on his behalf. Their entreaties became so insistent that Swamiji reluctantly agreed to do so. Shortly after initiation however Mr. T.—began to criticise Sri Gurumaharaj and disciples. One day when Mr. T.—was criticising Sri Gurumaharaj himself, he distinctly heard Swamiji's voice telling him that thenceforward Swamiji would have no connection with him, and that he had ceased to be Swamiji's disciple. Swamiji was at Trivandrum and Mr. T.—at Patna that day. Mr. T.—thereafter wrote several letters to Swamiji to none of which he replied.

A leading Pleader of Patna asked Swamiji if it was possible to attain perfection through the grace of a perfected Saint. Swamiji at once replied that it was possible. He illustrated it thus: "Suppose a beggar is passing along a street in front of the house of a millionaire who happens to take pity on him. The millionaire out of mere kindness, takes a lakh of rupees from his treasury and gives it to the beggar. The beggar becomes a very rich man, while the wealth of the millionaire does not appreciably decrease. Similarly a Siddha who had acquired much spirituality through Sadhanas of many lives can transmit a portion of it to some other person and make him free. Persons who

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attain perfection in this way, through the grace of God or a Mahatma are called Kripasiddhas."

He was also asked if it was possible for a perfected man to know everything about the Universe, all about the past, present and future. Swamiji replied: "It is possible. One who has realised God can know everything; but he does not care to focus his attention on anything but God, he does not want to know how the Universe is worked. The Adhikarika Purushas—persons who come with a special purpose have got to know something and they do know them."

Whether bad Karmas can be nullified or their effects modified by good Karmas was another question put to him by the same leading Vakil. Swamiji replied that they can be modified and in rare cases also nullified by good Karmas, provided the good Karma is done with that intention and is as powerful as the bad Karma, if not more.

Once the second son of Mr. S. P.—left the house in the company of some bad boys and went away. Nobody knew where. Nothing was known of him for 2 months. All efforts were made to find out his whereabouts, and the matter was published in the news papers. Losing all hopes the father at last wrote to the Swamiji informing him of all the facts and expressing an apprehension that the boy was not alive. Immediately Swamiji replied: "Do not be anxious. The boy is safe. He will come back to you very soon." On the 3rd or 4th day the boy came back. Such were some of the incidents during his visits to Patna. Sewan was one of the places in Bihar to which he paid annual visits. Here he was the guest of Sri Annapurna Devi whom he initiated at Benares and here he had many devotees and disciples. After her daughter, Jaya Devi, was married to Mr. Harihara Chatterjee, Railway Engineer, Lucknow, Swamiji used to visit Lucknow also.

Finishing the first long tour in U. P. and Bihar the Swami retraced his steps to Calcutta whence he

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proceeded to East Bengal, the birthplace of Nag-Mahasaya. During the time of Sri Gurumaharaj and Swami Vivekananda, not many persons in East Bengal had been benefitted by the Ramakrishna movement. In after years some of the Sanyasin disciples including the Swami had visited it and founded Ashramas there. Yet there had been no general awakening as in other parts of Bengal. The Swami visited it again in 1925 when he made a long stay and repeated the visits in the succeeeding years. Here he worked hard and untiringly, inspired hundreds of souls and gave Mantra-deeksha to hundreds. Influenced and inspired by him many young men joined the order and they are some of the most active and efficient workers of the order. Most of the days at Dacca were spent at the Ashrama. Mymensingh, Comilla, Shillong and Barisal were some of the many other centres where he electrified audiences by his fiery words and lifted them to a higher plane. As one of the concrete results of his labours his disciples at Mymensingh founded an Ashrama of their own for the worship of Sri Gurumaharaj.

At Comilla Swamiji used to be put up at the house of Dr. Aghor Nath Ghosh whose wife had met Swamiji at Bangalore. He was their guest while the Doctor was at Dinajpore also. At his residence at Comilla, Swamiji initiated many of the students and teachers of the Nivedita School. There was a low class girl student whose intellect was not well-developed. She was neglected by all. Swamiji noticed her and resolved to initiate her. He asked the Doctor's wife if she would kindly allow the low-class girl to enter the Thakurghar (worship room). Of course, she had no objection, and Swamiji took her to the room and gave her deeksha. Swamiji's love for the students was such that he used to buy cloths in bundles and distribute them among the students. The days of his stay at Comilla were festive days. The students and teachers used to be invited to join in the festivities.

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Once he had an attack of fever which continued for days. The Doctor became nervous and anxious and asked Swamiji if he might inform the Swamis of Belur Math or Dacca. 'Why, what for, asked the Swami. 'To attend on you, Swamiji,' said the doctor. 'Are you not attending on me? Is there any lack of attendance? Are you tired?' asked Swamiji and he forbade any one being informed of it. Although very much weakened by the protracted fever, he never allowed any special arrangements for his convenience—not even to answer the calls of nature. Once he went to the privy and on his return he found that his bed had been made. He was shocked and asked vehemently: 'Who touched my bed?' He was very uneasy and upset about it and had Ganges water brought and sprinkled all over it. 'People with impure thoughts should never touch my bed,' he said.

Speaking of the protracted illness of a certain person Swamiji told the Doctor's second daughter that he (Swami) would not linger in his sick-bed, he would die suddenly before people came to know that he was ill. He predicted such a death for her also.

He was dead against miracle working. If you want to see a miracle, look at Nag Mahasaya. He was an example of Gurumaharaj's miracle working.

It is a noteworthy fact that very few who had the good fortune to get him as their guest asked him any question on religion or philosophy. They were happy to have him in their midst, to feel his overflowing love and to love him in return. He seemed silently to clear their doubts if they had any. And the function of questioning and getting answers was relegated to the many who visited him.

After breaking up the soil where it had lain fallow and sowing some seeds there and also nourishing the old plants he returned to Calcutta.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

HITHER AND THITHER.

Returning from Calcutta he visited Bombay where the business magnates, Sir Iswar Das Laxmi Das and his son Seth Purushotam Das Iswar Das, were his friends. They had gone to Bangalore in the year 1922 and resided there for about a year and a half in a bungalow opposite the Ashrama building. An acquaintance was then formed which ripened into close intimacy. The Swami became their family friend and teacher. Many of their relations and friends also came into contact with him and were blessed by him. Accepting their invitation, he visited them almost evey year. They were most happy to entertain him, serve him and spend most lavishly for any cause which he had in mind. It was they who enabled him to instal electric lights in the Ashrama at Trivandrum at a cost of nearly four thousand rupees. They supplied him with ample funds to help numerous poor students and helpless widows regularly. Neither the Swami nor they desired the public to know anything of these acts of charity and benevolence. They abhorred being advertised or even mentioned in any such connection. The Swami respected their feelings in the matter so scrupulously that he refused to disclose the source even when he was questioned about it. Spending some days in Bombay he reached Bangalore in the month of May (1925). The movement there was spreading and growing stronger every day. For the Students Home, the Government of Mysore sanctioned the free grant of a building site 15,000 sq. feet in extent. Supervising the Ashrama works, putting things in order and making enquiries as to the progress of other centres the Swami remained there till July. He then proceeded to Kerala and visiting the centres on his way reached Trivandrum in August 1925.

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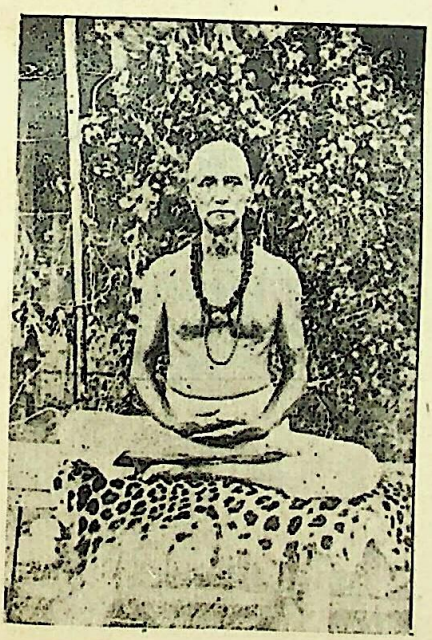
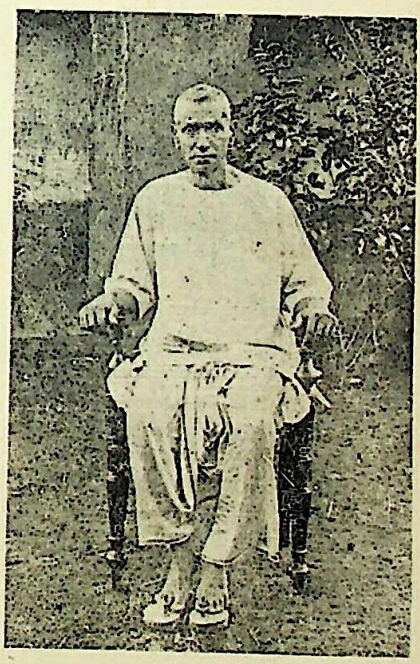
SWAMI NIRMALANANDA





SWAMI NIRMALANANDA

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SWAMI NIRMALANANDA.

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The Ashrama building stood in need of extension, the hilly ground all round had to be cleared and planted with useful trees and plants. Planning and executing and spending his own pocket money for these works, the Swami stayed there for over a month. This time he gave Sanyasa to seven Brahmacharins and named them Swamis Nrisimhananda, Ojasananda, Oorjasananda, Puranjananananda, Balakrishnananda, Arjavananda and Umeshananda. Mr. K. Raman Menon who had contributed handsomely for the construction of the shrine room and well having passed away, his nephew, Mr. Sankara Menon (Swami Amalananda), donated rupees three thousand in his memory, for the daily worship of Thakur. Swamiji next opened the Premananda Ashrama at Muttom and returned to Bangalore via Madras.

For the third time Swamiji visited Coorg in the year 1925. Hearing that Swamiji had arrived at Virajpet Mr. Chengappa (now Retd. Dy. Director of Agriculture) invited him to Ponnampet. The invitation was accepted and Swamiji went there by car. Many leading gentlemen of the place had assembled to meet him. As usual, there were questions put to him on a variety of subjects. His answers and conversations so impressed the audience that the idea of having an Ashrama there took deep root.

Some of the questions asked touched upon the simplicity of life advocated by Mr. Gandhi. Swamiji replied in flaming words: "This sort of advocacy is a set-back to progress. Are not the Indians, as a whole, leading a simple life—a life of contentment? That contentment is not the result of enjoyment of life to the full; but is a result of indolence, helplessness, inability to achieve better and higher things. It is morbid contentment from which people should be roused and raised. That contentment is a sign of death, not of life. It is not a sign of the Satwa state—a state reached after incessant struggle. Our people

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have not enjoyed life as it should be. Our standard of life is to be raised, not lowered. People must have enough enjoyment before they can think of giving up." At the same time he spoke very strongly against our people imitating western manners and ways of living. Elsewhere also he used to speak feelingly of the low standard of living of our people. Before departing he asked Mr. Chengappa and two of his relations to go to Virajpet the next morning. They went there as directed and were initiated by him.

It was now four years since the great 'President Maharaj,' Swami Brahmanandaji, passed away. The Mission and its activities continued to grow, only his benign, farseeing eyes and controlling touch were not on them. Their absence resulting in the necessity for some sort of comprehensive control over the working of the organisation must have been felt by the authorities. A convention of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission was proposed to be held in Calcutta in May 1926. Swamiji was invited and Swami Saradananda lovingly pressed him to go to Calcutta at that time. Responding to the pressure Swamiji arrived in Calcutta on the 2nd of December. Then again he made a tour of all the centres and went up to Haridwar. He returned and was present at the convention. A report of the same by an observer published in the Prabuddha Bharata of May 1926 (page 223) has the following:—

"In a series of conversazione held generally in the evening after the day's work was over, the senior Swamis of the order gave opportunities to the representatives and visitors to have their doubts solved regarding the various problems of work and religion. Swamis Shivananda, Saradananda, Vijnanananda, Abhedananda, Subodhananda and Nirmalananda–all of them had sat at the feet of the Master for longer or shorter periods—created, each in his own way, an impression upon the minds of the younger members which has surely proved of inestimable value to them. These informal meetings were a prominent feature of the

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convention; and many confessed that they might not have a similar experience in their life-time again x x." After the convention was over, the Swami returned to Bangalore in time to receive the President, Swami Shivananda, who arrived there on the 22nd of October and accompanied him to Madras on the 18th of November. As reported by the Vedanta Kesari (February 1927), the Swami stayed for four days at the Ramakrishna Mutt, Mylapore. On the 20th of November he gave a class talk to the students of the Ramakrishna Mission Students Home. He also held a very eloquent conversation at the Ramakrishna Mutt on the 21st and returned to Bangalore on the same day.

CHAPTER XXVII.

NIRANJAN ASHRAMA AT OTTAPALAM.

In December 1926, the Swami went to Kerala again to open the Ramakrishna Niranjan Ashrama at Ottapalam. To the south-east of the Ottapalam Railway Station is a village named Palapuram. Certain Nambudiri Brahmins of the locality had put up a small building on the eastern bank of the Bharata-River. Their intention was to raise a temple on the land. When they came into contact with the Swami, they felt that an Ashrama founded by him would better serve their spiritual needs than the proposed temple. The Swami was approached and he consented to open an Ashrama there. Accordingly, the owners of the property—the Palathol Illom people—and its occupant —A. K. T. K. M. Vasudevan Nambudiripad—made over the land and building to the Swami by a deed of gift in 1925. Close upon this, a Vishnu temple which was in a dilapidated condition was also gifted to the Swami. Contributions of Rs. 1,000 from Srimathi K. P. Parukutty Amma of Palat house, Rs. 500 from Sri

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K. Sankara Menon and Rs. 500 from Quilandy Ashrama were received just to start the work of constructing necessary buildings. These and other devotees and the sympathising public co-operating, other buildings and a separate shrine room were put up. On Friday the 10th December 1926, the Swami duly consecrated and opened the Ashrama naming it the Niranjan Ashrama, in memory of a great Iswarakoti disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. The fine image of Vishnu which was in the old temple was also installed in the shrine. It is a strange and happy coincidence that the image is of Gadadhara Vishnu. A Shivalingam was also brought over from the old temple and installed, later on, in a separate shrine. This lingam was subsequently converted by the Swami into a Panchamukha (five-faced) Murthi of Shiva. Additions and extensions to the Ashrama buildings and compound were made from time to time. The garden with its luxuriant growth of flower plants, cocoanut palms and mango trees extends over four acres of land. The broad and winding river, the extensive paddy lands and the numerous gardens reaching up to the high and ever-green hills on the west and south west present a scenery which for picturesqueness and suggestiveness is hard to equal.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FROM COORG TO TRIVANDRUM.

Soon after, the Swami went to Ponnampet in Coorg and selected the site for the Ashrama. He laid the foundation stone on Monday the 7th February 1927, and returned to Bangalore. He came back to Ponnampet on the 6th of June to see to the completion of the Ashrama building and the arrangements for the

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opening which came off on the 10th of June. He stayed there till the 12th idem. During these days he held many talks with Mr. Kalamaiyah, the foremost worker, and other gentlemen. Regarding the future work in Coorg he said: "Now, by the grace of Sri Gurumaharaj you have got an Ashrama. This will be the premier Ashrama in Coorg. Hereafter other small Ashramas may be started in other parts of the District. Thus the ideas of Sri Gurumaharaj must be spread. In course of time, every house must become a temple of His. I am old. I shall not live to see all that. But I see that is going to take place."

Referring to his own Presidential address Swamiji said to Mr. Kalamaiyah: "Perhaps your M. L. Cs. and others and you yourself are displeased at my not having thanked you. Am I benefited by the thanks-giving, or are they.?" "They are to thank you, Swami," replied Mr. Kalamaiyah. "No, said Swamiji, 'they are to thank Sri Gurumaharaj. It is His grace that has brought this Ashram into being. Through His grace I have got an insight, a peculiar sense, whereby I can smell the places He likes. Did I not tell you when I first came here that this is going to have an Ashrama? It is involuntarily that I smell it, without any effort. If I make an effort, I may go wrong. It is not for my good that this Ashrama has been built. I may stay here for a day or not. It is not my work also. It is His. So the Ashrama will go on."

Here again he expressed the idea that it is not by means of lectures but by personal talks that ideas can be given and people influenced and instructed. 'Don't you see the life of Sri Gurumaharaj, he asked and added: "Read M's Gospel to see how he visited various persons. Even Swamiji could influence people only by personal contact * * So, meeting people and giving them ideas is the work needed in India."

Returning from Coorg via Malabar Swamiji reached Tellicherry on the 12th of June 1927. Here

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he was the guest of Mr. Gopala Menon. Ottapalam was reached on the 14th. Three days were spent at the Ashrama, Swamiji himself being engaged in extending the flower garden and other works. On the 17th he left for Trivandrum. When Swamiji got into the train at Ottapalam Railway Station a Nambudiri Brahmin who was in the train asked him what his caste was. 'Sanyasins have no caste,' replied Swamiji. 'What caste did you belong to in your Poorvashrama,' pressed the Nambudiri. 'According to the Hindu Shastras it is wrong to ask a Sanyasin anything about his Poorvashrama' was the Swami's reply. This same question had been put to him by others also and he had given other answers. To one he said that he was born a Pariah. To another his answer was that he underwent training under his Brahmin father. The Nambudiri's pride of birth did not assert itself again. Rightly had the Swami said about the Ottapalam Ashrama that at Ottapalam he had made a breach in the Nambudiri fort.

In Trivandrum town, the Swami had a large number of women disciples and devotees. He advised them to meet regularly every week to exchange ideas, discuss religious subjects and compare notes. They used to meet in the houses of devotees by turns. Gradually they formed a Hindu Vanita Sangham. They invited the Swami to one of their meetings. On the evening of the 9th July they mustered strong in the Museum Lecture Hall. Swamiji arrived at 4-30 p. m. The meeting began with prayer and music and Swamiji delivered an inspiring address in English touching upon the various problems affecting the welfare of women in general and of the women in Travancore in particular. These meetings of the devotees in their own houses had salutary effects not only on themselves but also on the other members of their families, on their relations and the public generally. This was one of Swamiji's original methods of training and uplifting women.

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CHAPTER XXIX.

DEEP VOID.

News reached Swamiji by wire that Swami Saradanandaji was ill. The Swami then had a carbuncle on his leg, there were breaches in the Railway lines on account of heavy floods, the route was therefore round-about. Not minding any of these, he started at once for Calcutta. The journey was not broken at Ottapalam—it was the first and the last unbroken journey since 1912. He reached Madras on the morning of the 14th of August 1927. Religious classes used to be held at the Mutt every Sunday evening. The students requested the Swami to hold a religious conversation instead of the class. He acceeded to the request and spoke on what must have been the uppermost feeling in his heart at that time—Love—Love for the Lord and His children. He said: "The Bhakta is prepared to take any number of births and undergo all kinds of sufferings in order that he may serve and enjoy the presence of the Lord within and without.' The same night Swamiji left for Calcutta via Bombay. Six days of continuous travel took him to Calcutta. When he reached the Udbodhan Office the Swamis received him, and offered him refreshments. Declining all offers and unmindful of any other thing he went straight way to his beloved Gurubhai, a mighty Karmayogin and heroic Jnanin, lying on his death bed, waiting for the arrival of his dear Tulasi, a Bheeshma lying on his bed of arrows waiting for Uttarayana. The Swami approached him and announced himself. Slowly Saradanandaji opened his eyes and beheld the form of his beloved brother. Tears rolled down the eyes of both. What unfathomable depths, what infinite love, what exquisite spiritual forms did they see in each other's eyes?

Slowly the eyes of Sri Saradanandaji closed; joy and a beatific smile overspread his face; very calmly and

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quietly he entered into Mahasamadhi! The solemn chant 'Hari Om Ramakrishna' announced the heart-rending event to the outside world.

Swamiji felt a deep void in his heart. The passing away of Sri Maharaj had itself made life insipid to him. But he had to carry out the Maharaji's wish to complete the Trivandrum work. Then Saradanandaji was alive. Now he had also disappeared from view, Swamiji felt as he expressed it 'a deep cut', in his heart. Yet there was work to be done and he literally carried the burden of his body as a tool to do that work.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE FIELD WIDENED.

The Swami had calls from many parts of India and Burma which he hastened to answer. He set out on an extensive tour, visiting Bihar, Calcutta, Chittagong, Comilla, Tippera, Dacca, Narayan Ganj, Mymensingh, Dinajpur, Purnea, Chapra, Patna, Benares, Lucknow, Bombay and other centres in North India and also Rangoon, Mandalay, Akyab and other centres in Burma.

When he was at Benares on his way to Burma his urine was found to contain 28 per cent of sugar. It was suggested that it was not desirable to travel in that state of health. He said: 'I am only an instrument of Sri Ramakrishna. As long as the body lasts, I will try to serve His cause. I do not mind the disease or anything else." He set sail for Rangoon in December, 1927. Swamis Samvidananda and Visweswarananda accompanied him.

At Rangoon, the elite of the City and representatives of all castes and communities gave him a most cordial reception and presented him with an address of welcome.

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"And to-day", they said "we deem it our special privilege to meet you in this capital City of Burma not only because of your position in the Ramakrishna Mission, which is doing good work for humanity at large, but also for your loyal and sincere devotion to the great cause, viz., the uplift of the millions of people in the East and the West."

The citizens of Akyab also welcomed the Swami and presented him with an address in the course of which they said " you are one of the direct disciples of the world renouned Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and an eminent and distinguished colleague of the illustrious Swami Vivekananda. * * We are aware that nothing is more repugnant to you than any demonstration or expression of feelings with which you are regarded by the public of this town * * We trust that you would excuse us on the ground that whatever we have said has come from the bottom of our hearts." * * The Swami's reply to the addresses greatly deepened their regard and admiration for him. Many pious souls became his disciples. As a result of the Swami's visit, the Government of Burma made over to the Ramakrishna Mission a very valuable building for the use of the hospital maintained by the Mission and the Corporation of Rangoon was pleased to sanction a magnificent grant of Rs. 25,000 for opening a female ward attached to it.

On his return from Burma he again toured East Bengal. At Benares he made a pretty long stay and held many inspiring conversations. At this time a gentleman from Travancore who was residing in Manikarnika Ghat once paid him a visit. The Swami was highly pleased to meet one from Kerala—more so, as the gentleman happened to be a pupil of Mr. Seshadri, a devotee of great attainments and a disciple of Swami Brahmananda. He asked Swamiji if and how it was possible to get unbroken Brahmacharya. Swamiji replied that it was possible and that it depended on iron

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'resolution.' "Often you will lose sight of your aim and will have lapses. Don't be disheartened. You may not reach your goal in this birth. Things are not realised by the exertions of a single life. The very urge to put this question is the result of much sadhana. Is it not a pleasure to die for a good cause and with a good ideal before you?" Swamiji enquired if he meant to reside there permanently and added; "Kerala is a fine place. Return soon and work among the people. You must meet me when I visit Kerala next time. My soul is there. I thirst to return to Kerala. That is my place."

The Travancorean was advised by him to leave Benares and go to Kerala. He advised others to go to Benares and live there permanently. The widowed mother of Swami Parameswarananda (a disciple of Swami Saradananda) was one such. And, while the Swamiji was in an exalted mood, he asked the young Swami to go and live with his mother and serve her till the end of her life. To this day he is obeying that command. For some days he lived in the garden house of a rich gentleman. Then Swamiji told him: "You see, don't accept even a pie from a miser for your personal use. It will degrade you. But there is no harm in receiving contributions even from a miser for charitable purposes. Such contributions will make the miser a purer man. But, for personal use, accept not even a pie."

Returning via Bombay, Swamiji reached Bangalore on the 19th of May 1928. Soon after, he went to Ponnampet to preside over the Birthday anniversary celebrated there that year. Swami Shambhavananda, the Swami in charge from the very inception, and the co-workers had made the celebration something of a national festival. Men, women and children from all parts of Coorg had assembled in thousands. The programme was a very crowded one and the function a grand success.

Another event of the year was the initiation of 5 Brahmacharins into Sanyasa at Trivandrum in the month

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of August. Their Sanyasa names are Swamis Srikandhananda, Shylajananda, Adrijananda, Murahara-nanda and Viswambharananda. In September, 4 more were initiated at Bangalore. They are Swamis Vishadananda, Visalananda, Agamananda and Nirbritanda. The Ashrama at Salem was consecrated on the 14th of November 1928. From Salem the Swami proceeded to Ottapalam. Another event showing his wide catholicity, sympathy for the depressed and readiness to bear hardships even at an advanced age was an unusual ceremony performed by him in November of that year.

About 12 miles to the southeast of Ottapalam, in the interior of the Palghat Taluk, there is a small village called Tolanur, difficult of access for want of road communication. There is a shrine there dedicated to gods Subramania and Sastha. It is owned by an Ezhava (depressed-class) family. The Pratishta had been done long ago. The owner wished to have it renovated. It is usually done by Vaidic Nambudiri Brahmins. But the owner coming to know of the Mission and the Swami, approached the Swamiji with the request that he might be pleased to perform the ceremony himself. Despite the many deterrant factors, the Swami graciously consented to do it himself. Enduring much hardship he reached the village the previous night and gladly performed the ceremony the next morning. The villagers presented him with a welcome address in Sanskrit. In reply he thanked them for giving him an opportunity to worship Skanda and Sastha who, he said, were the liberators and regenerators of Kerala. He also spoke of the significance of the Yugavatara. Many who could not go to Ottapalam or elsewhere had the good fortune to have his Darsan that day. Blessing all, he left the place the same evening.

The Vedanta Society, Calicut, of which Mr. A. V. K. Menon, Principal of the Zamorin's College, was the President and Mr. Kunhiraman Menon, the Secretary,

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invited the Swami to go to Calicut and bless the Society. Swamiji accepted the invitation. At its meeting at the Palace Hall, Zamorin's College, Calicut, on 25th Nov. 28 the Swami was presented with an address of welcome. He replied in suitable terms and he blessed the Society whole-heartedly. Although no invitation had been sent, more than three hundred of the educated gentry of the place had attended the function. There was a coversation class in which Swamiji seemed to be at his best. It has been observed that the more intelligent, educated and receptive the audience, the more Swamiji shone forth in conversation.

Returning from Calicut and touring in Kerala again he received another call from Burma. With the 25,000 rupees donated by the Rangoon Municipality, the female ward of the Hospital had been built by the Mission. The Governor had consented to open the ward. The Swami in charge, Swami Shyamananda,—by whose exertions the Hospital and the Misssion work itself had grown into large proportions—invited the Swami to be present on the occasion. Swamiji left Bangalore towards the end of the year (December 1928) and graced the occasion by his presence. He received the Governor and thanked him for opening the Ward. He then visited other centres in Burma, gave Mantradeeksha to many, and returned.

Again he made an extensive tour in Bengal and Bihar. This ceaseless journey and unremitting work proved too much even for his iron constitution which demanded rest. The demand came in the form of double pneumonia which attacked him at Patna early in 1929. He was then the guest of Sj. Nandipati Mukherjee. A Retired Civil Surgeon attended on him. After some days Dr. D. P. Ghosh of Calcutta was called in. He examined and found the Swami's urine to contain a high percentage of sugar. High temperature, harassing cough and other ailments could not be controlled unless the sugar was reduced. Insulin injection had to be given. Swamiji was very weak. Yet he proposed that he should

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be removed to Calcutta. The doctors would not allow it. But he was adamantine. He said that in the first place he was putting his host and bhakta to too much trouble and anxiety. Secondly, the old Doctor would feel hurt if his free services were dispensed with and another's accepted. Finally he was removed to Calcutta. He recovered slowly and by the middle of the year returned to Bangalore via Bombay. Again he was on the move, visited the different centres in Kerala and in April 1930 opened 3 more Ashramas in Travancore, viz, Kayamkulam, Kulathoor and Palai. In September he again visited Calcutta. Despite illness and weakness, from 1924 to 1935 he toured in North India every year, in furtherance of the work.

Between the year 1930 and 1935 four more Ashramas were opened in Travancore, viz, Adur, Arur, Neyyur and Muvattupuzha, and one in Cochin viz, Pudukad. The site for the latter Ashrama was granted and material aid for its construction rendered by a Nambudiri gentleman, Vimpur Sankaran Numbudiripad. H. H. Rama Varma Thampuran and Kerala Varma Thampuran, Princes of the Cochin Royal family, have been the main supporters of this Ashrama.

It was during this period that Swami Vijnanananda ji visited South India. When he saw the Trivandrum Ashrama he said: "I had known Tulasi Maharaj as a great jnani and Karma yogi. But I now find that he is a great Bhakta also. The artistic taste displayed in the shrine is remarkable. Please convey my love and pranamas to him and inform him that I was very happy to visit this Ashrama."

The meeting of the two gurubhais in the Bangalore Ashrama was indeed touching. Swamiji got up from his seat hurriedly and ran to meet him. They embraced each other most affectionately. In spite of his protests, Swamiji dragged him by force and made him sit comfortably in his own easy chair, though Swami Vijnanananda ji preferred to sit on a bench lying there. After greetings,

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Swamiji retired to prepare coffee himself, putting sugar candy which was so much liked by Vijnananandaji and insisted on serving the beloved friend and brother with his own hands.

The visit of Swamiji to Ernakulam during this period deserves special mention. Mr. Ambadi Sankara Menon, a leading citizen of the place and a great devotee invited Swamiji to his house and gave him a royal reception. Many were invited for the function and there was a ceaseless flow of Swamiji's inspiring conversation. It was a regular feast that was held there and all partook of it.

In 1933, the Swami visited Rangoon for the 3rd time on invitation to preside over the Hindu Conference where he delivered a masterly and inspiring address which embodies a well thought-out, clear and comprehensive statement of the ways and means for the regeneration of the Hindu Society. It was, in fact, a summing up of the results of his long experience and ripe judgment on the logical application of Sanatana Dharma (eternal principles) to modern social conditions.

These years constituted the last but one Chapter of his life. The blend of Yoga and Sanyasa is here seen in all its grandeur, at its highest pinnacle. His work had extended from the South to the North of India and Burma also. It covered the whole of the motherland. It was appreciated, loved and esteemed throughout the land. The words of the Swami Ramakrishnananda, written in 1911, that the call of the motherland brought the Swami back from America, were never more true or appropriate in their fullest sense than now. The President of many a Ramakrishna Ashrama in the South was sought and requested to be the President of the Ramakrishna Sarada Math in the North—in Calcutta. The spiritual leader in the South was entreated also to lead a sister movement, the Vivekananda Mission, in Bengal. It was started by some of the most cultured and eminent sons of Bengal, who were

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also friends and devotees of the Ramakrishna Mission and it had hundreds of members. He was made its President. Thus there accumulated work for a spiritual Hercules. The Swami bore the burden lightly and stood as a being apart—as spirit pure and effulgent far removed from the earth, with not a tinge of attachment to anything mundane—as a fiery monk, as an Atmarama. The withdrawal of the great Swamis Brahmananda and Saradananda, from the physical field of action had left a void in the hearts of the devotees which had to be filled. It was very natural that the Swami's spiritual power and divine love should go to filll the gap. The rush of the spiritual current from the Power House in the South had its repercussions at the centre in Calcutta. And it reacted on Bangalore.

Question arose as to the status of the Ashrama at Bangalore and its administrative control. Swamiji held views which were strong and radically oppposed to those of the then Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Math. He was called upon to vindicate them. The local judicature could not uphold his views—decentralisation and co-ordination—but it wished him, however, in virtue of the great services he had rendered to the Ashrama, to continue to be in charge of it, subject to the control of the governing body and the supervision of a local committee.

A quarter of a century's diligence had made the Ashrama a place of retreat worthy of a Royal Sage. All the more so, it was for him who had laboured for it and who was also well-advanced in years. But the sacrifice of a principle for the sake of ease and comfort was alien to his nature. 'I have my begging bowl', he said and he quitted the Ashrama. The clash of views and the controversy happily subsided then and there, although the principles involved were fundamental and of far-reaching effect.

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CHAPTER XXXI.

'I AM NOT GOING TO DIE NOW.'

After more than a quarter of a century's examplary work, both spiritual and temporal, the like of which few have ever shouldered, the like of which was never attempted or accomplished by any other son of the Lord in Bharatavarsha, the Swami quitted Bangalore. In June 1935 he repaired himself to the Brahmananda Ashrama in Trivandrum. Here he offered to Sri Gurumaharaj the last batch of Bramacharins who had taken refuge with him; six were initiated into Sanyasa. They are:—Swamis Ramananda, Parananda, Sachidananda, Amalananda and Krishnananda. After a few days stay in the Ashrama, he left for Calcutta via Bombay. He toured in Bengal for some time and returning to Calcutta fell ill. The devotee, Dr. D. P. Ghosh, was ever in attendance on him. So also were Jivanmukta Kiran Chandra Dutt and the members of his family, Jatindra Krishna Dutt and a host of other ardent devotees. His condition grew worse. Many eminent Doctors such as Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roi and Sir Nilratan Sircar were called in. All of them were unanimously of opinion that the illness was fatal. The Swami had grown too weak to move or even to speak. There was no hope of recovery. Somehow he got to know what the Doctors thought. He called his own Doctor and told him: "Don't be anxious. I tell you I am not going to die now. There is some more work to be done for Sri Gurumaharaj and I must live to finish it. Let the big Doctors say anything. I don't want any of their treatment. I am a poor Sadhu; I shall take your medicines only. Give me whatever you think best. If you think it necessary to give injections, give even 3 or 4 a day without fear. I shall not flinch." The spirit in which these assurances were given was indeed strong and

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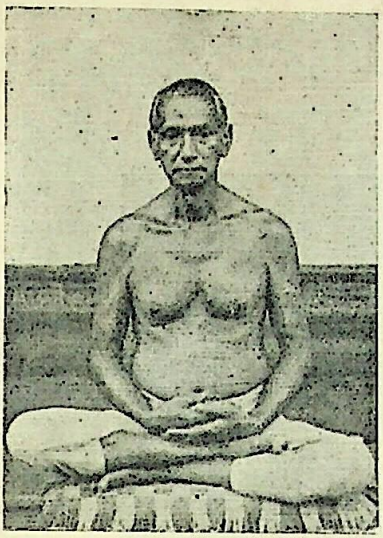

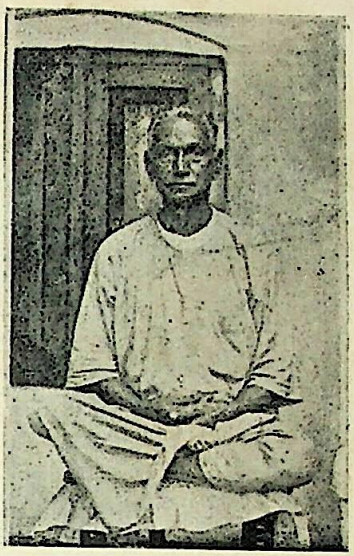

SWAMI NIRMALANANDA

SWAMI NIRMALANANDA

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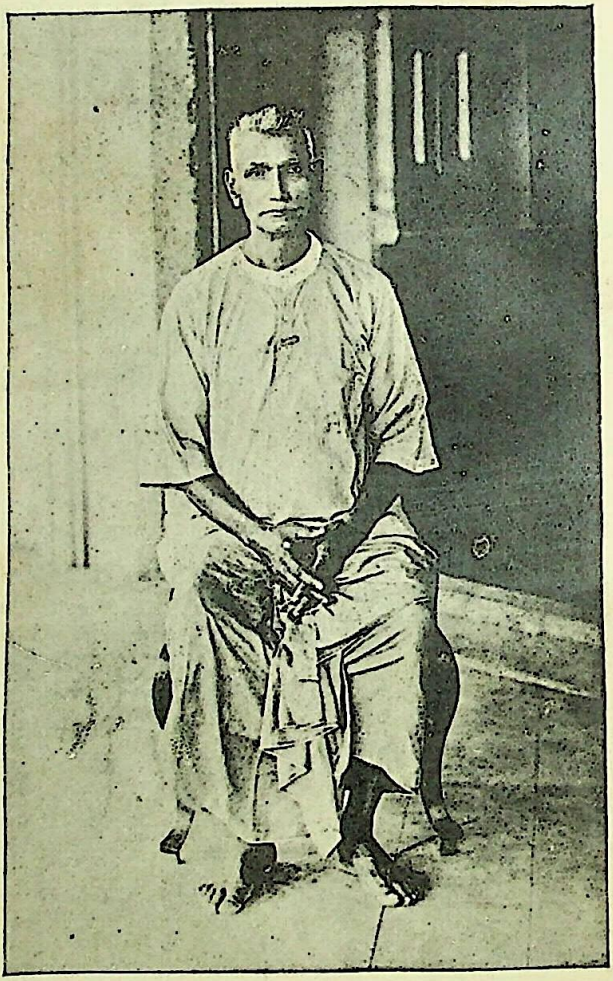

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bold, but the words which expressed them were hardly audible; so weak, he had grown. In spite of his assurance, every one thought that the end was near. The eminent doctors advised the devotees attending on him to wire to his bhaktas far and near.

Accordingly, without consulting the Swami and without his knowledge they wired to all important centres. Dovotees from all parts of India and Burma flowed in. Though glad to see them, he was yet deeply sorry that they had been put to the trouble and expense of long journeys. He was wroth with his attendants for having informed them that his condition was critical.

His physical powers were at their lowest ebb and life was trembling in the balance. Even in that condition his spirit retained all its old vigour; his intellect shone in all its keenness and clearness; his views of right and wrong and his sense of duty were exhibited in all their fineness. This was fully illustrated by his treatment of his disciples from Travancore and elsewhere. When he was informed that they had arrived, he ordered them to be rested and refreshed and when they were taken to his presence his first question to them was: 'who asked you to leave your posts and come here?' True disciples as they were, they answered: 'We received telegraphic information that Swamiji's condition was very critical. So we thought it our duty to come here. We could not wait to apply for and receive Swamiji's permission. Now we have seen Swamiji. If so ordered, we shall start back this minute." He turned to his immediate attendants and in clear, ringing tone asked them how they dared to drag them all to that distant place and give them so much trouble without his knowledge and consent. They replied that the doctors advised them to inform all. "So you and your doctors have settled between yourselves that I should die now? No, no!" In this strain he continued for about half an hour as if he were in enjoyment of robust health. He was so

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moved and sorry that his disciples, monks as well as householders had been put to so much anxiety and inconvenience, trouble and expense. Then he addressed the disciples and said :- 'I see you were not at fault. You need not go back just now.' Only one of them was made to return soon as his absence from the station might have caused the work to suffer.

All the days they remained there, he was himself giving directions as to how they should be looked after, what food should be given them at each meal and what places they should be taken to for them to see. One day they were sent sight-seeing with instruction to return by noon. But the tide in the Ganges delayed their boat by some hours. He remained fasting till their return. Such was his love for his disciples, his sense of duty and hospitality. 'A sadhu's sole concern should be for others and not for himself', he would say and he acted up to it in health and in sickness. The doctor in attendance on being asked by the disciples as to what Swamiji's condition was, would only say: "All eminent medical men have pronounced it as hopeless. But the Swami says he is not going to die now. Who can say anything about these supermen. They form a class of their own. When he talks forcibly, I am reminded of the Swami Vivekananda. He resembles the great Swami in many respects. He is also his ideal!" The doctor was a friend of the Swamis from early days. When the doctors confirmed his view that there was no present danger to life, he saw that the climatic and other conditions at Calcutta would not suit him and he decided to go to Trivandrum. The doctors pressed him to stay on for a few days more and also to take the steamer to Madras instead of undertaking a long railway journey. His health, they thought, was still in danger. But the Swami's strong will and 'iron resolution' prevailed. He went straight to Trivandrum by train and remained there about 5 months, recouping his health, training his disciples and improving the Ashrama. He next

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went to Ottapalam arriving there on the 31st of May 1936.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LIFE AT OTTAPALAM.

One of the first striking acts there was a Kumari Puja (worship of girls) in which he actually worshipped twenty girls with all Upacharas, gave them money and made sashtanga pranamas before them. Thereafter 9 of them were his constant companions and he was a mother, father, teacher, friend and guide to them to the end of his days.*

He wanted to give them sound education and efficient training. Looking around he saw that lots of children in Palaparam were roaming about unlettered, their parents being too poor and ignorant to give them even the knowledge of the three R's. He then established two schools in the Ashrama compound, one for girls named, Sarada Vidyalaya, and the other for boys named, Niranjan Vidyalaya. Teachers were employed for both. Pupils joined in large numbers and from all classes and communities, from the highest Nambudiri Brahmin to the lowest Pariah. Most of them could not afford to buy books or slates and many were ill-clad. The Swami was moved to pity. He went to his devotees at Bombay and soon returned with about a thousand rupees worth of things for the use of the pupils,—books, slates, paper, pencils, note-boooks, picture books, etc, and cloths of various sorts—and distributed them to one and all according to their needs. Some of them were also fed in the Ashrama itself. On most of the days there used to be feasts on some account or other and all the boys and girls took prasad there, seated together in the meditation hall without any distinction of caste or class. The parents of the

* Those fortunate children are Bhuvaneswari, Sarada, Sushila, Sarojini, Parvati, Savitri, Meenakshi, Padmini and Dakshayani. Rukmini and Sarada of Adur also used to frequent and stay with them.

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children also attended them. Both the schools had gymnasiums, where the Swami himself taught them various exercises. They were also taught Keertana, Japa, Bhajana and Meditation. Pupils with homes near the Ashrama spent most of their times in the Ashrama itself. Thus they had an all-round education and almost all the benefits of gurukulavasa. The Swami declined to apply to the educational authorities for recognition of or grant in aid to the institution. In this also he was setting an example to the people.

To popularise the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and to make it entertaining even to illiterate men, women and children, Swamiji conceived the idea of making them the subject of katha prasangas (kalakshepas). To this end he had portions of the life written in the Malayalam and got it performed twice in the Ashrama.

Not content with setting up means for the uplift of the people in general, his divine love flowed to make individual lives fuller and happier. In that poor village the Nambudiri Brahmins—their women in particular—were the worst sufferers. The community had been groaning under a senseless, heartless social tyranny. The women, specially with their old ghosha system still adhered to, were 'confined, cabined, cribbed' and kept in ignorance. His heart wept for these unfortunates whom no one on earth thought of or cared for, who had not the narrowest means of escape or uplift. Without uttering a single word about them, without even once referring to their plight, the Swami worked for them slowly. Gradually he made breaches in the walls of their ancient customs and superstitions and let the light of the Lord fall upon them. He gave them nourishing food, both material and mental, and had new habitation built for them. They grew naturally, the growth was from within, it was healthy, peaceful and vigorous. They raised their heads, became men and women, the children of Sri Ramakrishna. With their eyes opened and hearts enlarged they began to

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think of the wide world and the holy Tirthas and they longed, once in thier life, to get out of the confines of their little homes and village and to visit one or more of the great Tirthas. He encouraged them, gave them money, and sent them to Rameswaram and Kanyakumari. He himself took many of them to Kanyakumari a few months before his passing away. Some of them he sent to Trivandrum for medical treatment for a long period. In all this he exercised his natural care and thoughtfulness and made detailed arrangement for their safety, comfort and convenience throughout the journey.

From the day of his Kumari puja, even the dullest and the purblind could see that his life was one continuous worship of the Virat, that it was not the life on the surface that he led, but that he lived and moved and had his whole being in the Self, in the Mother. Once while the children were all engrossed in all sorts of plays, running, jumping and wrestling in the Ashrama and in his presence, he went near them, took up a girl and placing her on a high stool, asked the other children to see the Mother in her and worship her. He also asked the adults present there to do so. Some of them thought that it was one of the Swami's many jokes and kept laughing. The Swami was serious. He worshipped her and prostrated himself before her. Instantly all the others followed. What to the others was mere imagination was to him a stern reality.

Among the group which had come to the Ashrama for cooly work, one day the Swami noticed a young girl. 'She is a very pious soul,' he said at once and asked her to be made a permanent servant-maid of the Ashrama. Unasked he gave her initiation. She was one of those whom he took to the Cape at his own expense. He made no distinction between the high and the low, the educated and the uneducated. The spirit of the words of the Gita that were often on his lips "Pandithah Samadarsinah"—the wise are same-

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sighted was always in his heart, was at all times illustrated in all his actions.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CASTING INTO THE MOULD.

"Like the gentle dew that falls unperceived, yet brings into blossom the fairest of roses" was his influence and teaching, for the most part. Of precepts he had very few, his life was the shining example to all. In the training of his disciples, his own children who had forsaken everything else and clung to him, however it was not the unnoticed dew alone, but reverberating thunder also had its part to play. He was not very sparing in its use. Little did he care if it frightened any. He wanted his children to be bold and fearless. For a following, for name or fame or for the goodwill of men, he never cared. A monk to the very core of his being, he had dedicated himself so completely to his Master that long long ago his self had ceased to exist. The Master's spirit flowed through him for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many. It had moulded him into an expert spiritual Doctor, not a physician alone, but a surgeon as well who did not hesitate to apply the knife when necessity arose. But such occasions were very rare. 'See and learn', 'observe and understand,' 'exercise your body and mind in useful and healthy ways', this was the teaching of this master of philosophy and Yoga. He only wanted them to be men, bold and strong. He knew that knowledge could not be imparted or infused from without. It was there, within all, covered hy veils. To help the uncovering was alone the teacher's function. This he did by giving them hard work to be done as tapasya, as worship. He did not lay down any University or other educational qualification for his

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would-be disciples. Had they character—purity and steadiness, that was enough. Even here he was so kind and indulgent as to put up with a good deal of insincerity and waywardness in the hope that ultimately the man will come up all right. He considered hard manual labour done in the right spirit as good tapasya. The harmonious development of all faculties and cleverness in doing all works—from digging and tilling up to Samadhi—was the goal he set up before his devotees. Bookworms he simply pitied. To live with him, to see him work, to hear even his stray remarks and jokes was sound education. Once he was engaged in uprooting a big tree in the Ashrama compound in Trivandrum. The roots were firm and deep and many sided. "Asanga Sastrena Dridhena Chitva." Cut them asunder with the axe of dispassion, said the Swami, impressing upon the disciples how hard it was to get rid of old samskaras. Tamas and Rajas should be worked out he would say. In every little act he would demand close attention and concentration.

One day at Bangalore he had asked a disciple: "Why don't you cut and keep the lily flower in the shrine'? 'Which flower, Swamiji?' enquired the disciple.

S.—Haven't you seen the lily plants on the road side near the gate?

D.—Yes, there are some plants there.

S.—Did you pass along that road to-day?

D.—Yes, many times.

S.—Yet, you did not see a flower on any of those plants?

D.—Some how I failed to see.

S.—You do not see the things that are before your naked eyes! I went there only once and I noticed it. Are you so absent-minded and non-observant when you

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walk. I wonder how you will practise meditation if you are incapable of observing things before your very eyes. Meditation requires the keenest perception and an extremely alert mind. Perhaps, you sit down to meditate, throw your mind and senses into a lethargic condition, a sleepy mood and after some time get up satisfied that you went into deep meditation. If you practise that way, you will never be able to meditate. That is quite a different thing. For meditation you have to control your senses and direct your energies inward. The mind must be extremely active, I mean alert, in perceiving the finest objects. It must be well concentrated. If your nerves get blunt, how will you perceive fine objects? Cultivate the faculty of close observation and perception. Otherwise you cannot even form a mental picture of the object of meditation. Perhaps, you don't require any such picture or you have no capacity to picture an object in your mind. How else could you fail to notice that flower? Now go and see if it is there. Such silly matters are unworthy of a Paramahamsa! That is what you might think.' The disciple went and brought the flower.

Another day, clothes were put to dry on the terrace. Suddenly there was drizzling rain. The disciple was engaged in some other work. He forgot all about the clothes. Swamiji called and asked him "what are you doing? Don't you see it is raining and the clothes will get wet?" "Yes, Swamiji I will take them down immediately, I forgot it," said the disciple and brought them with him. Then Swamiji asked again: "How will you get on with the work, if you are so absent-minded and careless?"

D.—I say sincerely, Swamiji, I forgot it.

S.—I don't say you are insincere. But you are so careless. You do not attend to things whole-heartedly. I had the good fortune to see and serve a greater Paramahamsa than any of you. He was so immersed

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in God that he could not notice if his cloth was blown away. Yet, he was very particular in attending to the details of every work whole-heartedly. He used to take us to task for negligence or carelessness in matters however small. But you people go about doing your work half-heartedly and carelessly. That is your notion of sanyasa spirit. When you do a thing, do it with the greatest care and whole-hearted attention. Non-attachment does not mean carelessness, indifference or half-heartedness in work. Work with one pointed attention, give up without a single thought.

A garden tool had been lent to a friend who did not return it in time. After some days Swamiji asked for that particular tool. It was explained to him that it had been taken away by such and such a friend. "Then why did you not get it back in time?" asked the Swami vehemently. "This also is your Sanyasa spirit perhaps. It is not that I want these things with me or as my property. I am pointing out your defects and shortcomings to you so that you may become men. You know I have many friends with whom I can live in ease and comforts without any worry or botheration. Yet you see, I live a most simple life in your midst, and I work like a coolie. Do I want anything from you, do I require your service? Even at this advanced age I can walk away to the Himalayas with Kamandalu in hand as I used to do in my youth. I do not want anyone to attend on me. I do not want a smooth and easy life. That is my strength and that is why I am bold. Yet I suffer all sorts of worry and undergo all sorts of difficulties for your sake, to make you better men. And you people feel hurt at my pointing out your defects. In western countries I have seen, if one's defects are pointed out, he feels grateful and he thanks you for it. But here it is otherwise. At once they raise their hood. Those who receive instructions in a spirit of humility and gratefulness will improve; others, in whom the devil raises his horns will never improve.

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Above all he wished his disciples to have faith, intense faith in Sri Ramakrishna. While he was talking on the future work of the Ashrama, one of the disciples asked him : " Where is the personality like you, Swamiji. Unless there is such a personality behind us how can we carry on such works ? " The question was no sooner asked than Swamiji's eyes flashed and thundering came the reply : " Personality ! indeed ! you depend on personality ? Have you faith in Sri Gurumaharaj ? If you have faith in Him and if you hold yourselves as mere instruments in His hands and carry on the work that comes to your hands, personality and such other things will come on their own accord. This is the mistake with you all. You have no faith in Him. Don't you see various Christian organisations working wonderfully well for the same cause. Christ is the personality, the power behind. His is the cause ; with faith in Him, all those organisations work sucessfully. If you also have that faith in the Power behind you, if you have surrendered yourselves at His feet, then work on boldly, success and other things are sure to follow."

Who can measure the height and girth of his faith, of the depth and vastness of his devotion. Extremely undemonstrative, he hardly ever spoke of Sri Gurumaharaj except as one whose greatness he was unable to understand. He described himself as Ramakrishna's dog. In all these years only once or twice was he seen glowing with emotion at the mention of his Master's name in public. Another touching incident of a very private character may also be mentioned.

Sri Gurumaharaj's Birthday was being celebrated. Swamiji felt that the morning offering was not very satisfactory. He called the disciple in charge (Swami Vishadananda) and asked him what the morning offering was. Such and such sweets, fruits and other things were offered, explained Vishadananda. Swamiji felt sorry : "Devotees have contributed liberally for worhip on this special day. But you have made improper

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arrangements and offered such poor things." The disciple began to explain. "There will be hundreds of devotees attending the morning service. They have all to be given prasad. Similar attendance may be expected in the evening also. Arrangements have been made so as to make both ends meet." "I did not ask you anything about the devotees and distribution of prasad. I asked you about the offering to Gurumaharaj. Could you not have offered something better? Did you not see varieties of fruits in the market?"

D.—Yes. I did.

S.—Why did you not buy a few annas worth of them and offer them to Him this day. Have I asked you to feed all the devotees with all the offerings. Is it not due to your lack of devotion that you did not feel the need?

D.—Yes, Swamiji, it is my lack of devotion.

By this time Swamiji's face became red with emotion, tears began to flow from his eyes. He could not control them. Bitterly he said: "Sri Gurumaharaj is starving; I do not want any food to-day." His feelings began to rise. The disciple had not witnessed such a mood before. He was non-plussed, puzzled and struck with remorse. 'I shall make better arrangements at once' he said and withdrew. By the time of the noon-service everything was done as desired by Swamiji and he was satisfied.

Asked about the puja paddhati (method of worship) Swamiji said: "There are two kinds of pujas. One is in an established shrine where a regular system is followed and the other a devotee's worship of his Ishtam when and where he finds it convenient. Our's is a systematic puja in an established shrine. But that should not be followed like a lifeless machine. What would you do if Sri Gurumaharaj was alive and you were attending on Him. Do likewise now also. Feel His presence and feel that you are attending on Him. Such

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faith and such service will make Him present here always. Attend on Him with faith, purity and devotion."

"Devoted service to Sri Gurumaharaj is tapasya. What we gained by our pilgrimages and tapasya, Shashi Maharaj attained by his constant and devoted service", he used to say. And in making pilgrimages or leading parivrajaka life, complete self-surrender and dependance on God must be firmly established. But that cannot be if one carries money with him. Once Swami Vishadananda went as far as Rishikesh and spent some days in meditative life. Some friends had supplied him with money for his expenses. When he returned Swamiji said: "with plenty of money in pocket even the Maharaja of Mysore can go and live in the Himalayas. That will not be tapasya. Depending on friends is not surrendering yourself to God. In my young days I used to travel thousands of miles on foot without a single pie with me and without asking for anything from anybody. If we surrender ourselves at His feet, He will look after us. But, if we depend on ourselves or we rely on our friends there is no surrender to God. We foolishly think we can help ourselves that we are powerful and so forth. God is the sourse of everything. Have that conviction, surrender yourself and then practise tapasya. Such self-surrender made heroes of men, made them fearless, perfect workers. It is casting away the dross and taking up the gold. Renouncing the lower little self you become identified with the supreme self. That is yoga, and yoga is dexterity in action. Be dexterous in action, no matter what the action is." This was a theme which he was never tired of harping on: work, work, teach yourself to do every sort of useful work in the best, easiest and quickest possible way. In this, he himself was the grand example. On all days except when he was seriously ill, he got up at 2 A.M., and did Japam and meditation till 5 A.M. Then commenced physical works of all descriptions till he retired for rest at 10 P.M. He did

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gardening—digging, planting, transplanting, weeding and cutting and he taught how such little details were to be done, he taught music; he taught various methods of constructing ovens and of cooking, he taught carpentry and mason's work. Much of the work of additions and alterations to the Ashramas was done by him and his disciples without the help of professional workers.

At Ottapalam he was once engaged in improving the Shiva temple and the hall in front of it and also the kitchen to the south of the Ashrama. The Swami Muraharananda was doing carpentry work, and Swami Ramananda was building the walls of the kitchen, and Swamiji was giving instructions and leading a helping hand. A devotee, Mr. Chengappa, who was staying there as Swamiji's guest and who was standing near, thought within himself: "Why is the Swami making the Sanyasin disciples do this sort of work? Scarcely had I finished thinking", says Mr. Chengappa: "When Swamiji got up and before anything was said on either sides he went on to say 'you know every art must reach its perfection in a monastery. In Rome even brewery reached its perfection. The best wine was made there. That wine is there for sale even now, it is priced very high. Perfection in every useful art must be reached here. That is why I am making these young Swamis do carpentry, masonry, painting and other works' I was simply stunned by the illuminating answer to my unasked question. I know of several such instances related by devotees in Coorg."

One special characteristic of his work was that it was always artistic. He demanded beauty, grace and loveliness and also durability in all things, however small or trivial they may be. And he had a talent for making everything artistic. He would cut a piece of bamboo or a small branch of a tree and make a beautiful walking stick with an animal's head. An ordinary mud-pot would be made to appear a beautifully painted China flower vase. A granite Shivalinga was

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transformed into a benign and meditative Mahadeva with matted locks, five faces and blue necks. The various tools and implements kept by him in all the Ashramas, his hukhas and pipes of different fashions and materials, everything connected with him bore the stamp of Art, had the touch of beauty and bliss, concentration and perfection.

He stressed the importance of work for women also and he used to hold up the Holy Mother as the ideal for all women. She used, he said, even to wash and dry and keep in their respective places the clothes of the young devotees of the Master without their knowledge. It was in the uplift and worship of womanhood that he saw the salvation of the Mother land. Here also he set the example by the worship of Kumaris. In his last days he made that worship take the form of whole-hearted service to them and their all round training. He trained their hody by teaching them gymnastics and dances and plays of different styles and methods. He bathed them, fed them, combed their hair, put sandalwood oil on their heads, taught them even such little things as how to cut mangoes evenly; he taught them folk songs and stotras

Strangest of all, although most of them were under 7 or 8 years of age, he initiated them all with Mantras, taught them meditation and enforced regular sadhana both morning and evening and they were also directed to circumambulate the shrines with bhajana songs every evening after arati. He encouraged and helped them to have their own Ishtadevata and worship, and himself took part in it. "In course of time you will see my spirit in them", he said once.

His sympathy for the poor, love for the lowly was beyond compare. Feeding of the Daridra Narayanas was not a formality with him.—It was dead earnestness. He never ate anything until their feeding was over. And then he took something as yajna-sishta, as he expressed it. Once on a Birthday, unexpectedly large

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numbers had gathered. All cooked food was exhausted; the Narayanas remained to be fed; rice in the store room was also exhausted. The workers gave out that nothing was left and that they might return. The Swami heard it. That set him on fire, roaring rage and weeping compassion flowed out of his person, words and acts. Terrible and Majestic he looked. None dared to approach him—not even his nearest and dearest disciples and friends. None had seen him so awe-inspiring as on that day. He took out and threw at them a bundle of currency notes. "Go, purchase rice, cook and feed them", he ordered. Rice was immediately collected from many houses and the poor were fed. That was an object lesson to all present.

It was a day of Sri Ramakrishna's Birthday Celebration. Many devotees assembled in the morning. Swamiji spoke at length on the regeneration of India, on the need for starting industries and other matters, and then asked the devotees to take breakfast. Children of the neighbourhood had also come to take prasad. All were served and the cry "Sri Gurumaharaj ki Jai" went forth. Swamiji went to the dining hall and found that all had begun to eat. A poor girl was standing outside. He went and brought her in and took the Swamis to task for having neglected her. "She is a poor orphan, he said, "why did you not go and see who all were waiting outside? (Pointing to some boys) You invited these, could you not have asked this poor girl also? How heartless you are! Howmuch-soever I may point out your defects and try to rectify your ways, you will not care to learn and improve. Your hearts do not soften." He referred to this incident many times that day. He was so much moved at the sight of a neglected orphan.

In this and other ways, by example, advice and admonition, he laboured to mould the character of his monastic and lay disciples and devotees, men, women and children. Till the year 1936 the Swami had not

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remained at Ottapalam for more than a few days at any time and those occasions had been mostly availed of by the English knowing devotees and visitors. All the time, at a distance had stood a large body of ardent souls who could not approach him freely and directly on account of the language difficulty. This time, in the last act of the drama, he brought the direct method of teaching and the language of the heart into current use. Mere children of five or six and illiterate persons were now made able to understand his words and imbibe his ideas. They could easily follow his directions. Each individual received the training suited to his nature. Each had his shortcomings or defects pointed out and each one received his full share of his attention and blessing. This was perhaps his greatest work in these days, the least public but the most abiding and vital, the transformation of character of several individuals.

Since his return to the south after his serious illness in 1936, he had not visited Bombay. His many devotees yearned to have his darshan. He went there early in the year 1937 and after a stay of few days returned to Ottapalam, breaking journey at Salem. Although much worn out and shattered in health by long strenuous work and illness and journeys, the Swami, then aged 74, appeared, as the correspondent of the Indian Express who interviewed him described "a quiet, but dignified figure, well nigh answering to the physical and mental attributes of the magnanimous man of Aristotle, a tall, handsome strong personality with a keenly intellectual face." He again visited Salem during the Ramakrishna Centenary Celebration. The citizens presented him with a welcome address which was read by Rao Bahadur C. S. Bhaskar, M.A., Bar-at-Law., Swamiji thanked them and he delivered the centenary address.

He visited Calicut also twice the same year. The local Vedanta Society, blessed by Swamiji, was thriving and making its beneficent influence felt. The Swami Sekharananda (a disciple of the Swami) in charge at

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Quilandy proposed that, under the auspices of the Society a home of service, be started at Calicut. Swamiji's permission was got and a Home was started for supplying a crying need, viz., the free medical treatment of children. The merchant prince Seth Nagji Purushotam, opened the Home. It proved to be the one thing, the town wanted most. Children of all castes and religions receiving expert treatment every year number many thousands as may be seen from the Annual reports. Swami Sekharananda instituted religious worship of the Sevashrama, reading of scriptures and religious classes also in the Sevashrama. That also proved to be of very great help to many. The Vedanta Society's work also was taken over by Swami Sekharananda. Swamiji was pleased to see that the Sevashrama was doing very useful work and had become very popular with all classes. It was the only Hindu Religious Organisation in the principal town of the District. Swamiji wanted something more there than a Sevashrama for medical treatment. There was much scope for work of different kinds. The many influential gentlemen who met him there agreed with him in that view. He prepared the ground and returned. In this trip to Calicut Swamiji took with him the girl disciples of Ottapalam. They were all the guests of Swamiji's ardent devotee and disciple, Sri T. V. Krishnan Nair, who was the Subordinate Judge at Calicut at that time. For the first time in their lives the poor girls saw the historic town of Calicut, the sea and the wide world.

His one last wish with regard to these children and his other female devotees seemed to have been to take them himself to the lotus feet of the Mother. As its external symbol, he decided to take them to Kanyakumari. With a large party including them he left Ottapalam in July 1937. Perfect arrangements were made for the journey and the halts and for the stay in the Ashrama at Trivandrum and also at the Cape. How he thought of the needs and comforts of every

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one of the party was worth study. No mother would have felt such solicitude for her children. He looked to every little item of their wants, even for hot-water baths for them. Every one felt supremely happy.

He gave many nice little presents to the children, chains, lockets, etc. which he himself selected and purchased from the bazaar. During Dussera days he gave new clothes to all, he sent Vijaya greetings and presents to his devotees in North India; he had new and pretty frocks made for children of the Ashrama servants (Panchamas). It was a sight to see him call the three year old daughter of the Panchama servant-maid and give her grapes, sugar candy and other fruits and sweets of which he always kept a stock for distribution to the children. He got a tailor to the Ashrama to stitch garments for his disciples and devotees. He explained to them various methods of stitching and several fashions of shirts, coats and caps prevalent in various parts of India. He brought a cap from his wardrobe and asked them what cap it was. They said Gandhi-cap which it was not. He then pointed out to them where the difference lay. Thus did he instruct on various subjects; of amusement he gave them enough, with many stories, humourous remarks and jokes. He also often transported them into far-off realms, sometimes by means of his words, sometimes by melodies and sometimes by his abstracted moods and far-away looks. Thus, in those elysian heights he kept them for months. The trip to the Cape was joy intoxicating.

From Trivandrum many local Bhaktas with their families joined the party to the Cape. It was a very large and happy family with the Swami as its head. Excepting perhaps at the visit of Sri Maharaj, no other party was so led to the presence of the Mother of the Universe. It was indescribable felicity. In the surging sea, on the Paurnima day Swamiji was both the playmate and the protector of the children. He played

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with them in the waters, he took them in his hands and on his shoulders and advanced further and further into the roaring and surging sea. Rising above the waves with his devoted children, he was actually playing in the ocean of the phenomenal world. Those days at the Cape and at Trivandrum will ever remain an ineffaceable and blessed memory with all who had the good fortune to be with him then.

After their return from the Cape, some of the elders of the party found it necessary to go back soon to attend to their family affairs. The children had to be sent back with them. Ashrama matters detained Swamiji. How could the children go away without their Swami. They wept loudly for hours together. Not the children alone, but all felt the pang of separation though they knew it was for a few days only. Tears rolled down every cheek in profusion! Somehow they departed, kept crying till they reached the residence of Dr. Tampi where Mrs. Tampi comforted them.

At times, during those days, Swamiji referred occasionally to the past, to the days of Sri Gurumaharaj and of his own travels. After the children left him, his thought seemed to go back to those days oftener. He spoke of some of the places he had visited, of the language, manners and customs of many people and once of his own father. He referred to many religious teachers whom he had known and who had passed away, thought of himself as having outlived them all and humourously described himself as Sri Ramakrishna's Kakabhusundi (the old being, mentioned in Yoga Vasishta). It was all an indication that he was withdrawing himself and preparing to go back to the Supreme Abode.

Yet there was some more work to be done for Kerala. He had started only religious centres and made provision for their management by a deed of trust. He had made them all autonomous; independant

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of each other, but working in co-ordination for the cause of Sri Gurumaharaj. In all Kerala there was no organised secular body to carry on charitable and philanthropic works for the uplift of the masses. And no one had deemed it worth his while to try to create one. He would supply that want; he would create a body in the State of Travancore and one in British Malabar also and leave it to the people and to posterity to work it and carry it on if they cared. In the name of the re-generator, the Prophet-saint, of Modern India, in the illustrious name of Narendra, he created a Mission in Travancore.

Following up that idea and wishing to make Calicut a centre of activities, Swamiji next proceeded to Calicut. The cultured Zamorin Raja of Calicut had just then ascended the Masnad. He invited the Swami to his palace and received him very cordially and respectfully. Swamiji blessed him in appropriate terms and particularly wished him long life. At the time of parting the Zamorin enquired if there was anything he could do for Swamiji then. "Nothing, replied Swamiji, 'I shall let the Zamorin know when I need anything.' There is no line of Kings in Modern India older than that of Zamorin at whose port the first European trader to India (Vascodegama) landed and at whose feet he went as a supplicant. The meeting between the Zamorin and the disciple of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna reminded the spectators of the meetings of the Royal-sages with the Brahmarshis of ancient Bharatavarsha as described in the Puranas. Both were highly pleased, the Zamorin the more so at his having got the Swami's blessings at that time and particularly on that day on which he had received news of the birth of a prince in his family.

Swamiji was there able to organise a very influential and representative body of men for the great work he had in mind. The Zamorin was pleased to be its Patron and the body was duly incorporated.

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He returned to Travancore and giving finishing touches to his work then left it for the last time in December 1937 and reached Ottapalam. The children and the devotees were glad beyond measure that their Swamiji was again in their midst.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LAST DAYS AND MAHASAMADHI.

After the last severe illness at Calcutta Swamiji never regained his former health. On the other hand he was slowly but steadily growing weaker. But quite unmindful of his bodily condition he went on working. When he reached Ottapalam he looked worn out, although his voice, his words and his actions all exhibited the same old vigour and strength. Once more he went to Calicut to make arrangements for the Association to start work. But bad season and his indisposition did not permit him to stay there many days and he returned to his beloved Ashrama and river side at Ottapalam.

Now, at any rate, the Swami seemed to have felt within himself that his main work was over. All his subsequent utterances suggested that he was about to lay down his body. 'I shall depart shortly and then you will all be free,' he would say to his senior Sanyasin diciples. Then pointing out to them he would ask a friend: 'Who will look after these children of mine, when I am gone.?" One day he called the monastic disciples and told them: 'I have made myself ready to start. Now tell me what I should do with these Ashramas. Each one of you should tell me separately what each has to propose. Don't consult each other." Then each one expressed his views. To one of them

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Swamiji asked "Then, won't you allow me to retire at all." No, replied the disciple. 'You do not understand anything' remarked the Swamiji and asked 'How will you live.' "Obeying Swamiji," replied the disciple. "That is now, but how in future, ?" he again asked. He put questions to the girl devotees also suggesting that he was about to leave them. "Who will give you Shambhu-Chutney when I go away," was one such question. Many were the hints he threw out indicating the nearness of his final departure. On the 5th of March, five weeks before his Mahasamadhi, he was conversing with a number of devotees. The Editor of Vivekavani was also present. Towards the close, Swamiji said 'I may give up the body shortly, at any time - who knows ?" (Vivekavani—Vol. II, p. 709.) All the same, he was never a stricter disciplinarian or a more severe task-master than at that time. The least negligence, carelessness or remissness on the part of any disciple was treated as a great offence. Not a day passed without their having some lesson instilled into their minds. It was as if he was now smelting them and putting his own mark upon them—mark indelible and divine, mark which was to give them admission to the world of freedom and bliss. More and more work he was giving them, more and more was he showering his grace upon them and more and more was he withdrawing into his self. One day an Ashrama-servant met with an accidental death. Swamiji felt very sorry for him and prayed for the peace of his soul. He also paid a handsome amount of money to his bereaved mother with instructions as to how she should invest it. Not long after, Swamiji became indisposed.

Not feeling well, he took a purgative on the morning of the 20th of April 1938. But the bowels did not move. So at about 4 p. m., a Doctor was called. He examined Swamiji, gave an enema and thought the temperature could be brought down by a quinine injection. But that injection being a muscular one, he was doubting within himself if he should inflict that

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pain and whether Swamiji could stand it in his then bodily condition. Reading his thoughts, Swamiji said, "Don't feel nervous, Doctor, you may do what you like with this body; it is not mine." The injection was therefore given.

The next day (21st of April 1938) his temperature fell from 103° to 99·5°; but the upper arm where the injection was given became a little swollen. It was also giving pain. Then another Doctor, an M. B. B. S., who was known to the Swamiji, was called. He prescribed certain medicines for external application also. Addressing him, Swamiji said "Doctor I have some very costly lint and medicines with me. You take them and use them for poor patients, not for the paying ones." They were collected and properly packed and set apart to be given to the Doctor. The treatment continued, but neither the pain nor the swelling abated. Swamiji, however, continued giving instructions regarding the construction of the guest house, and other Ashrama works.

On the 22nd there came a letter from the Ashrama at Palai. When it was taken to the Swami he asked whether it was for him. 'No,' said the disciple. "Then, why do you bring it to me" asked Swamiji. "Certain Ashrama matters are desired to be communicated to Swamiji." Was the disciple's reply. Oh! said the Swami "I have nothing to do with Ashramas and their affair. I have no more connection with them. Let each Ashrama be looked after by its residents and let me lie down peacefully.' He did not care to have the letter read out.

On the 23rd, a slight swelling appeared on Swamiji's feet also. Referring to it, he remarked to one of his house-holder disciples, who was standing by, "you see, the children are looking intently at my swollen feet. That swelling is not like this (pointing to his arm). It is something quite different." To the

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little girls who were always near him, he taught some new songs, himself singing them very sweetly. He played with them, laughed with them and playfully showed them how to cry. "Who will give you mangoes nicely cut when I am gone," he is said to have asked them on that day. Poor children! they did not in the least comprehend the import of those words. To the Sanyasin disciples attending on him he said: "Don't give me any more medicine." Later on he said "I don't want anything from tomorrow forward." He added 'Let me lie down peacefully.' In spite of these significant words, the disciples did not, in their excess of love for Sri Swamiji, beleive that the great end was so imminent.

His bodily condition was no better on the 24th. Growing anxious, the disciples wired to Dr. Tampi of Trivandrum that afternoon (Sunday). More than once Swamiji enquired if a book post had come to his address. It would appear that it was the Bengali almanac for the new year that he was expecting. Not getting it, he referred to the old one and also to the new Malayalam one. That night he was heard to say "Some one will have to go back to-morrow." It was the next day that His Holiness Swami Vijnananandaji Maharaj attained Mahasamadhi. He was also constantly calling on the Mother "Ma, Ma, Oh Ma."

He was also heared to say: "Yes, Trivandrum work is finished." It may here be mentioned that Swamiji had regarded Trivandrum work as a charge entrusted to him by Sri Sri Maharaj (Swami Brahmanandaji). The moment Swamiji read the telegram conveying the sad news of Maharaji's Mahasamadhi he expressed that he had lost all interest in life. He wished to retire. "But" he had said "it was his wish that I myself should complete the Trivandrum work and I must do it. His least wish is a command to me." That seemed to have been the main-spring of all his subsequent activities there.

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The night of the 24th passed. Till morn on the 25th Swamiji was his old self, a stupendous personality, a great master, alert, active, teaching, testing and directing his disciples. From now onwards, he was the embodiment of Peace. He hardly spoke anything. True to his words, he took neither medicine nor food except few drops of soda-water or orange-juice which the disciples lovingly pressed him to take. When once a few drops of Panopepton were mixed with soda-water, Swamiji reprimanded the attendant. He was physically very weak and lay absorbed in contemplation. Dr. Tampi (with Mrs. Tampi) arrived at 10 P.M., on Monday and examined Swamiji. As there was nothing to be done immediately, doctor said, he would examine him again the next morning. "That will do", said Swamiji.

The night passed very quietly. At 4 A.M., one of the attending disciples went to his side and said: "Swamiji, soda". Swamiji then asked quite audibly: "What is the time"? "4 A.M.", the disciple replied. Swamiji again became silent. Ekadasi—Harivasara – had begun. At day-break, the children had their bath as usual, assembled by his side and began Bhajana and Keerthana. Doctor Tampi came and examined Swamiji. The worst fears were then almost confirmed. At about 7 A.M., Swamiji was seen attempting to get up. One of the disciples slowly raised him and kept him resting on the disciples breast. Then in low tones Swamiji said, "Yes, yes, yes, that's all right"—the last words that came out of that mouth from which had flashed forth Divine messages and commands in those thundering tones. After a while he again lay on his bed, a deep calm and holy peace settling on his benign countenance. Bhajana continued. Ganges water and Thirtham were administered. The children sang:—

Nirmalam hridayam yasya,
Gurorajnanuvarthine,

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Nirmalanandapadaya,

Tasmai Sri Gurave namah.

The last words of the chant went forth; to greet them, as it were, went out the very last and supremely peaceful breath of the Beloved Master.

Then in solemn yet anguished tones, from the host of disciples and devotees assembled, arose the spontaneous cry,

"Jai Sri Gurumaharaj Ki Jai.

Jai Sri Swamiji Maharaj Ki Jai."

The heart-rending news of the Mahasamadhi soon spread and devotees poured in from all quarters. By about noon, the Ashrama was packed with mourners. The doctor who had been attending on Swamiji and Doctor Tampi again examined the body and declared that *rigor mortis* had set in. Preparation for the cremation then began. At about 3 P.M.—Ekadasi being over—the body was bathed, dressed in silk and profusely garlanded with flowers. Arati was performed, and all the disciples and devotees—men, women and children—offered worship and fell prostrate at the Holy feet. In the meanwhile, a funeral pyre had been constructed with Sandalwood and other appropriate materials on the banks of the holy Bharata River. Thither the body was taken by Dr. Tampi and other devotees and disciples in procession headed by a Bhajana party including Swamiji's children. The pyre was duly lit and the fire blazed forth verily like the spirit which had inhabited the body, glowing, pure and free. By sunset, the fire died out leaving the host of devotees plunged in grief and gloom.

On the 7th day (the 2nd of May) the disciples and devotees gathered the sacred remains and deposited them in the Ashrama after due and proper ceremonies. Special puja was offered on the 13th day when about 2,000 Daridra Narayanas were sumptuously fed.

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CHAPTER XXXVI.

RETROSPECT.

A life of seventy-five summers, pure, strenuous and exalted and wholly dedicated to the service of humanity!

Ordinarily a man or a woman is viewed as an individual having a separate entity and living a life of his or her own as distinct from that of any other. It is natural and no life is viewed otherwise. But there is a class of men who come into the world or who manage to step out of it as extra-ordinary. They wear the cloak of humanity to enable them to move amidst and serve human beings. Their tabernacles are but vehicles and channels through which super-human energy and light percolate and pass to the earth to strengthen it, enliven it into heaven. They partake more of the nature of eternal principles and powers than of human beings tied to the wheel of Karma. To that class did the Swami Nirmalanandaji belong.

The great Incarnation of the age, Sri Ramakrishna spoke of four of his disciples as Iswarakotis. They come down with the Avataras to the world of men. His chief disciple, Swami Vivekananda, was not one of them. He was a class by himself, high above the others. The other Sanyasin disciples were styled Antarangas. The Swami Nirmalanandaji is said to be one of them. And that is an added reason why he is so dear to our hearts. By his example he showed us the highest possibility of man as man. Incarnations of Iswara and Iswarakotis are exceptions to the rule. In the world of Maya, they are eternally different from men, they are of a different species and they must ever remain so, although for love of man, they sometimes put on the human garb. It is in their very nature to shine, in time, as spiritual luminaries, to show

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themselves as Divine and to shed Divine love and benediction on earth. But for one of the human species (though perfected as a sage in bye-gone kalpas) to grow to his fullest limits, to break the bonds of humanity, to emerge free out of the prison of the ego is an achievement which humanity may well be proud and glad of and profited by. That is a rare event. Krishna himself says, "Manushyanam Sahasreshu Kaschid Yatati Sidhaye." Of millions of men only one tries to reach perfection and of those who try one in a million attains it. And that was what the Swami did. That was not only the highest achievement of man for himself, but also the highest good that he can point out to the world—Man becoming Brahman!

Of those rare souls who become knowers of Brahman, all do not get dissolved in the ocean of Brahman. The lovers of the Lord, it is said, prefer to retain their Satwic and attenuated Ego to enjoy the sweetness of the Lord, to be His servants or help-mates in His Leela on earth. Such were the Antaranga-disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. In the words of Swami Vivekananda "Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the perfected Sages of a previous Kalpa (Cycle) take human bodies and come on earth with the Avataras. They are the associates of the Lord. God works through them and propogates His religion. Know this for a truth that they alone are the associates of the Avataras who giving up all sense-enjoyments with repugnance spend their lives for the good of the world, for the welfare of the Jivas (C. W. Vol. VII. p. 259.)

Referring particularly to his gurubhais, the Swamiji said: "Know each of these who are here of great spiritual power. Because they remain shrivelled before me, do not think them to be ordinary souls. When they will go out, they will be the cause of the awakenment of spirituality in people. Know them to be part of the spiritual body of Sri Ramakrishna who was the embodiment of infinite religious ideas. I look

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upon them with that eye x x x You may go round the world, but it is doubtful if you will find men of such spirituality and faith in God, like them. They are each a centre of Religious power and in time that power will manifest." (C. W. VII, p 256.)

It was that power, that strength and fearlessness, that love and spirituality that was revealed through Swami Nirmalanandaji. The measure of power manifested and the objects to which it was directed and applied varied with time and place and the varying physical and mental characteristics of the people he was brought into contact with. But in the physical plane none worked harder, none exhibited greater power of endurance and resistance and none turned out more work than the Swami. In India at any rate, no other disciple of Bhagavan travelled so widely and so often, visited and revisited so many places from Chamba in the Himalayas to Cape Comerin in the South, from Kashmir in the West to Burma in the East, propagated Bhagavan's and Swamiji's ideas so much, founded so many Ashramas and in his individual capacity made so many lay and monastic disciples as the Swami Nirmalananda.

Success of life as viewed from the stand-point of the individual was thus complete and perfect. Humanity was replaced by divinity.

Such a one has nothing to gain for himself, nothing to fear from in all the worlds. The individual becomes the instrument of God, the channel for the outflow of the Cosmic power. It uses him for its own ends. The Adhikarika Purushas, its agents, infill him and work for the evolution of the human and the manifestation of the Divine. And so was he infilled.

When asked about his visit to Southern India the Swami Vivekananda is reported to have said that he would certainly visit the south and that he would burst in upon it like an avalanche. Truly did he revisit and

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burst in, but it was in the form and person of Swami Nirmalanandaji, his beloved Tulasi, 'the servant of his servants.' Any one taking pains to compare the two can hardly fail to note that the one is perfectly modelled on the other. The bright intellect, the large heart, the democratic spirit, the towering strength and boldness and above all, the unlimited love for the fallen and the down-trodden are all seen in the one as a clear reflection of the other. It has been admitted on all hands that in the sweeping grasp of subjects, in readiness in answering any question, in brilliance in conversation, in the harmonious combination of all the different Yogas in oneself—in all these Swamiji was next only to Swami Vivekananda. And the Swami on his part "used to look upon Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda as one and the same." He also used to say that none can understand Sri Ramakrishna except through the Swami Vivekananda who was, so to say, the interpretation and commentary on Sri Ramakrishna. All the activities of the Swami as well as his character were moulded on those of Swami Vivekananda. Was it not this identity of spirits that prompted Trailinga Swami to single him out and give him prasad; and the Swami Premananda to instal him as Shiva? and was it not because of this sameness of heart, of love for the lowly, that the Swami came to be sent to the South? 'My heart is in Kerala', he said to a visitor at Benares. Not that he had any greater love for his devotees there than elsewhere, not that it was a more comfortable place to live in, but that the inhuman custom of untouchability and unapproachability and the tyranny of priests and castes were nowhere more cruelly at work in India than in this land of Parasurama. And no other but the bold Swami Nirmalananda with the spirit of Swami Vivekananda could have faced it and dealt it such deadly blows that it is for ever fallen and will never again raise its head. The most priest-ridden and orthodox country in Kerala was Travancore. It was there that

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the Swamiji laboured for a quarter of a century. The result of his labours, as assessed by the Government of the State and published in the report on the Census of India 1931 (Travancore Part I, pages 356 and 357) is worth reproducing. Referring to the inception and growth of the movement since 1911, the report proceeds to say: "Though the movement is entirely spiritual, it is having indirect social effects also.

Indirect Social Effects in Travancore.

As Sanyasins are above caste, no distinctions of caste are observed in the Ashramas and members of different castes of Malabar can be seen living as members of one happy family in these Ashramas. At all important functions in these Ashramas, people of all castes down to the lowest Pulayas, Parayas, etc., take their food together, and, as the food served is invariably prasad, orthodox Hindu doctrine also supports this practice. The Sanyasins spend most of their time in meditation and in practical work, attending to the various needs of the Ashramas, the annual visits of the Swami Nirmalananda giving them the requisite trainings. Philanthropic work is also undertaken whenever necessary in the spirit of pure service, the poor and the needy being treated in a spirit of worship. Just after the floods of 1924, over Rs. 14,000 were distributed in the most inaccessible places in the interior by the Sanyasins."

This great revolution in the deep-rooted habits of the people was not effected by propaganda, jathas or news-paper articles, but by love and example. The reader might remember how the Swami stormed the orthodox citadel at Haripad by merely touching a leaf or two.

The social influence went further. As observed by the citizens of Salem in their address to the Swami, his "labours for over twenty years in Kerala towards the uplift of the depressed classes.....paved the way for the Historic Proclamation of His Highness the Maharaja

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of Travancore, throwing open the State Temples to all Hindus." It must also be mentioned here that in the long and glorious uplifting work he did for the people, he did never ask for or receive any help from the Governments concerned.

Ashramas are spiritual centres influencing social habits, dissolving superstitions and caste prejudices and creating human brotherhood. The Swami established 18 such centres in the South. To these may be added many institutions of a purely philanthropic character, schools, dispensaries, etc.

But he did much more than that. Creation of institutions and destruction of caste-prejudices were the bye-products of his main work which was spiritual. To spread the ideas of Sri Ramakrishna as interpreted and amplified by the Swami Vivekananda, to sow the living seeds of spirituality over the length and breadth of the land, to turn the minds of men, women and children to Light and Truth, this was his real work. To make Man and to knit them into a brotherhood was his main objective. In this also the result of his labours went far beyond the most sanguine expectations of his devotees. Hundreds upon hundreds—men, women and children, all over India and Burma—were given refuge and taken by him to the feet of his Master. Sanyas he gave to 35 young men. Many of them are experts in various kinds of arts and crafts. The beautiful Temple, the first of its kind in the South, built as his momorial in the Niranjan Ashrama, Ottapalam, was mainly the work of his Sanyasin disciples. That such a temple could be built in so short a time after his Mahasamadhi is proof positive and eloquent of the hold he has on the heart of Kerala. That Temple itself is, so to say, a standing monument of the greatness, beauty and durability of his work. The disciples are enthusiastic and thoroughly self-denying in relief and other works of service also. Appreciating their work in the Flood

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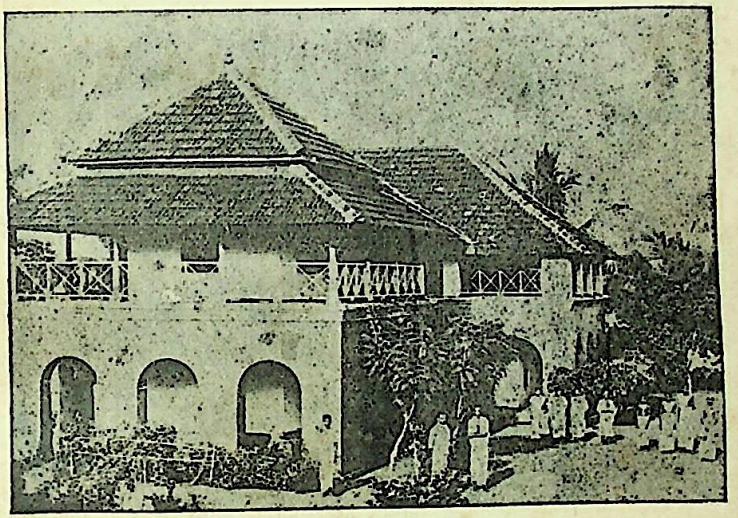

SRI RAMAKRISHNA—NIRANJAN ASHRAMA
OTTAPALAM

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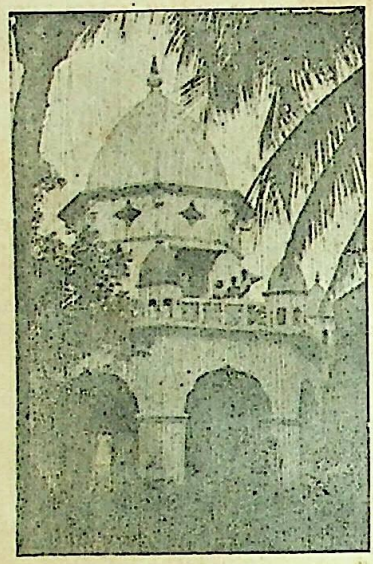

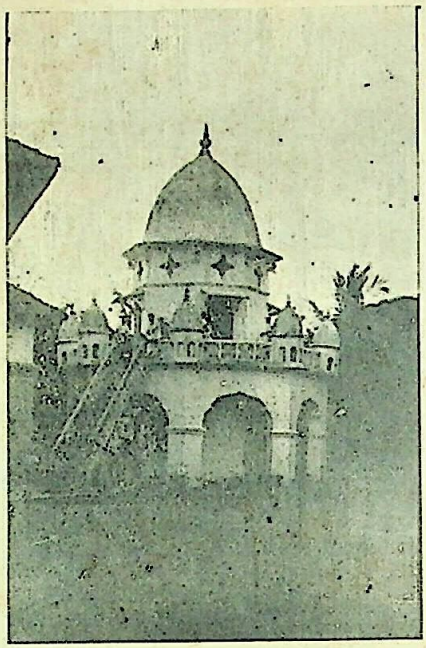

SWAMI NIRMALANANDA TEMPLE
OTTAPALAM

SWAMI NIRMALANANDA
at Ottapalam Temple

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Relief of 1924, the Government of Travancore invited their co-operation in the campaign against Malaria in 1935.

It may well be hoped that his work is going to yield a very rich harvest in the near future. Far greater than the number of his disciples is the number of young men, women and children who have seen him and loved him; him they can never forget; their minds he has influenced deeply; to them were vouchsafed the inestimable boons of Satsanga and Mahapurushasamsraya. In all places which he has made holy and sanctified by his presence, the name Ramakrishna has become a house-hold word. Wherever he went, he introduced Sri Ramakrisna and Vivekananda. For truly, in him was Vivekananda, in him was Ramakrishna.

"Verily, the Sun is He, His the ray,
Nay, the Sun is He and He is the ray."

(Hymn of Creation)

Swami Vivekananda.

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SWAMI NIRMALANANDA

HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS

PART II.

CONVERSATIONS.

(Extracts from the notes of Sri P. SESHADRI IYER, M.A., M.L.,)

A Class talk at Haripad on 20—2—1911.

Sri Guru Maharaj's Kingdom was spiritual and one of love. In his presence all were alike. In God's eyes there is no inequality. Difference in status there will be in social matters, but not in spiritual ones. All great Bhaktas and Jnanis have recognised this. In spiritual matters we do not look at the exterior, but into the heart.

Caste.

To a question put by Yudhishtira, the Great Bhishma, lying on the bed of arrows said, "Jati is not the cause of nobility: it is guna. If a low-caste man lives in his own Vritti and does Swadharma, the gods regard him as a Brahmin." Look at the large-hearted Acharya, Sri Ramanuja; what samesightedness he had! There is a temple belonging to his sect at Melkote. There, all castes including the Pariahs are allowed to go right into the Holy of Holies on a particular day of the year.

Caste is not bad in itself. Every caste is good and contributes to the general welfare of society. We should always remember that caste is based on division

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of labour. A healthy society wants the labour of all castes, the secular and spiritual teacher, Brahmana, the ptotector and defender, Kshatriya, the trader and industrialist, Vaisya and the artisan and manual labourer, Sudra. If any one part of the Social body is affected, it affects the whole system. In a timepiece, if any simple part of the mechanism gets out of order, the timepiece goes wrong. So we clean it occasionally by the application of lubricants. In much the same way, we should keep society clean and in proper working order by applying the lubricant, love and other suitable means. This is what Sri Ramakrishna taught. This was, what Swami Vivekananda had in mind when, on being intimidated by the Social reformers, he said in his Madras speach that he was a root and branch reformer, and not a branch and leaf reformer who went on merely cutting and pruning. The Yogis renovated their bodies by Kaya-kalpam. The modern reformers try to appear young with the help of an hairdye and the razor. Trying to destroy caste and to bring about a superficial unity is courting death. Variety is the very essence of life.

The old Rishis were very far-sighted. They saw the past, present and future and laid down rules of conduct adaptable and applicable to all times and circumstances. We must follow them and not the present-day reformers.

The Ramakrishna Mission.

An organisation which has a divine agency behind it will grow and cover the whole world. It will become perfect. A merely intellectual body which depends on its own decisions can never have that power or perfection. The Ramakrishna Mission has a divine agency behind it. It was not mere men or money that brought it into being. At the time of His Mahasamadhi Sri Ramakrishna had no earthly possession whatever. His disciples, the young Sanyasins, lived in an old dilapidated house. Its roof was leaky and it was

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believed to be haunted. A Bhakta rented it for them for Rupees ten a month. We were all packed in it like sardines. As for our maintenance, no one knew whence the next meal would come. To beg of the educated circles in Calcutta was solely trying. At the most, a handful of rice was all that was given after an hour's abuse. Sometimes we had only the abuse. There was not even a pie to buy plantain leaves or anything else. And see, how that band of poor boys has influenced the world! Did the Maharajas and Zamindars help them? No! The Grace of the Lord was their help and the middle-class was its channel. Big Officials may come to hear lectures. It is only the middle class that has sympathy. The poor people also are good and sympathetic. So these are coming forward. Who impels you to help the cause with such genuine love and sympathy? Search your hearts and you will see that it is the Lord who induces you to do so. And therefore, I say that there is a divine agency behind this movement. From this nucleus of an organisation the whole of Kerala will be benefited in future. It is the indestructible spiritual germ, the Divinity, that is working through this organisation. The Mission is not meant to be antagonistic to any other organisation. On the other hand, it will help all well-meaning ones although we cannot subscribe to all their whimsical methods and principles. Our principles are what have been laid down by Rishis, Seers of Truth. I have every faith that our work will grow and expand. As one who was in the band of those few poor boys, who ate rice without curry and who lived in a haunted dilapidated house, I have firm faith that it will grow.

The Benares Sevashrama.

About 12 years ago, two of our Brahmacharins went to Kashi, on foot, of course, and begging their meals. There, houses are rented out and pilgrims take them up. When they are about to die, their small possessions are snatched away from them and they are turned out

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and left to die anywhere outside. The two Brahmacharins saw some such helpless old people left to the tender mercies of nature. They felt for those poor pilgrims. But what could they do? They had no money. However, they got some rice by begging, prepared Kanji (gruel) and fed and nursed them till they were well again. Seeing their labour of love, some sympathetic people subscribed one anna, two annas and so on for their expenses. The month's subscription amounted to three rupees. The Brahmacharins persevered in their service. The work steadily grew. And now they have a big house, a good hospital with all medicines, appliances and excellent medical aid. This is how all our institutions grow.

The Murshidabad Orphanage.

In Murshidabad, a whole village was flooded. Many children were left orphans. Our Swami Akhandananda saw some of them. Feeling that something must be done for them, he started an institution on a very modest scale. Mahomedan boys also were taken up. He brought down a Moulvi to perform religious ceremonies for them. Gradually growing, the institution has now become a regular orphanage. There are many institutions like that all over India. Slowly, steadily, they grow. They are not advertised, they are not propped up by big names, they flourish because of the sincerity of the workers. What is wanted is genuine love.

Haripad, 14th August 1912.

Swamiji was staying in the Government Palace near the temple. In the drawing room was placed a photo of Sri Ramakrishna dressed in Kashaya cloth. Seeing it Swamiji remarked that only once in his life had he seen Sri Ramakrishna clad in Kashaya. During a considerable portion of his Sadhana period he had to wear Kashaya. But ordinarily he wore only white cloth.

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Srāvana.

That was Srāvana day. Swamiji spoke of its origin. During Chathurmasya - the winter months of N. India—our forefathers, the Rishis, settled down in one place, the rest of the year being spent in making pilgrimages and going about from place to place. With Chathurmasya began a settled life for them. They had a convenient habitation, new clothes and good food. They could then pursue the study of the Vedas and the Shastras and perform their religious ceremonies without break or disturbance. It is in memory of this that Srāvana is observed by Brahmins even now. They perform thrikalasnānam (bathing thrice a day), put on new yagnopaveetham (sacred thread) make Gayatri Japam, study the scriptures and eat sumptuously.

Srāddha.

A devotee had to perform his father's Sraddha Ceremony that day. Addressing him, Swamiji said: "What is offered with Sraddhā is Srāddha. The word Sraddhā has no equivalent in English. What Sraddhā is, you will find in the life of Nachiketas, meeting the very god of death face to face and questioning him on the problem of life and death. Our ancestors used to perform Sraddha Ceremony every day. After a time it became a monthly ceremony, and finally an annual affair. It is explained by the theory that a day for the Pitris is equal to a year for us. Anyway, the idea underlying the ceremony is the offering of food to the Sūkshma Sareera (Subtle body) which lives on even after the death of the gross body.

Q:—How can we get Bhakti ?

Bhakti.

A:—Bhakti is not the resultant of any Karma. It is a gift from God, a feeling, natural and spontaneous. It cannot be manufactured. To get Mukti there are means and methods

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prescribed, but not to get Bhakti. Pray to God incessantly, and he may vouchsafe it to you out of His grace.

A gentleman present :—Does not the soul die in sleep ?

Swamiji :—What do you mean by soul ?

The gentleman :—I do not know.

Swamiji :—You do not know the meaning of your own question ! I suppose you mean the mind.

The gentleman: —Yes.

Swamiji :—Matter and force are inseparable. You know that. What is matter ? That which is acted upon by force. And what is force ? That which acts upon matter. You cannot separate the one from the other. Now, there is another well-recognised truth : Something cannot come out of nothing. In the light of these two principles you will see that the mind does not die, but remains alive and active even during sleep. If it were not alive and active during sleep, it could not be so after sleep. The difference between the sleeping and waking states is only one of degree and not of kind, just as the difference between light and darkness. Darkness is only lesser light. When the western Psychologists speak of the mind they only speak of its modifications such as joy, sorrow, anger, etc. These are not the mind. To know the real mind we have to go behind these modifications by first stopping them. The mind is like a lake, and the modifications are like the ripples and waves on its surface. These can be stopped by the practice of concentration and then you will know what the mind really is. Searching for the soul is something like searching for the seed in a jack fruit. The mind also is matter, but very fine. It appears intelligent because of the Atman, just as a piece of iron becomes red and hot like fire, when it is put into the fire. It is the light of the Atman that percolates and shines through the

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mind. A black or opaque chimney obstructs the light, while a transparent glass chimney passes all the light beautifully. An impure mind obstructs the passage of the soul's light, a pure one lets it out without distortion or diminution.

The pure in heart shall see God. The pure-minded alone realise the soul. And he who has realised the soul has no more fear.

When Swami Abhedananda and myself were practising tapasya at Rishikesh, we found a practical example of this fearlessness which comes out of realisation. There was a Sanyasin on the opposite bank of the river. He was suddenly seized by a tiger. Even while in its jaws he was shouting 'So'ham, So'ham. We could distinctly hear his triumphant shouts. It continued to the very end. We narrated this to Swami Vivekananda. He has mentioned it in one of his lectures.

Gitopadesam

One of the visitors requested Swamiji to give him Gitopadesam (formal instruction for reading the Gita). Swamiji said "If your reading is Sakāma, that is to say, for wordly prosperity, for wealth, progeny etc., the requisite Upadesa cannot be given by me as I am a Sanyasin who has renounced Kama-Kanchana. If, on the other hand, it is Nishkama, no formalities are necessary. It is enough if you have faith and devotion. With these, begin parayana and God will bless you. If you want Sakāmopadesha you may get it from some Pandit. For nishkamaparayana Bhakti is the one essential thing, not pandithya, nor formalism. Grantha (book) makes for granthi (bondage) in the absence of Viveka and Vairagya. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that to kill oneself, even a pin will do, but to kill another one must have good weapons and some practice. For one's own mukti, it is enough to have faith in one word.

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For an example of pure devotion without Panditya, take the case of the devotee who was met by Srichaitanya. The devotee was holding the Gita-grandha topsy-turvy; tears of love were flowing incessantly from his eyes. When questioned, he said, he did not know a word of what was written in the grandha, but no sooner did he take it up than the vision of Parthasarathi instructing Arjuna was before him. Try to have that kind of love.

On Meditation

Meditation is very difficult in the beginning; so is thinking in any particular line. But it becomes easy by practice. Regularity in time is a very important factor in meditation. If you meditate at 6 A.M., to-day, meditate at the same time to-morrow and on all other days. You should habituate yourself to do so for at least a few minutes, wherever and in whatever condition you may happen to be. As you continue the practice daily with such regularity, a natural groove will be formed in the brain and meditation will thus become easy. Beginners should never practise more than once in twenty-four hours. You should never strain the brain nor meditate after hard work, physical or mental. There should be no noise to distract your attention. But in the conglomeration of different sounds as in a temple festival, meditation may be practised, for there you begin, continue and end in the midst of the noise. In such a case there will be no diversion of attention. At other times and places, there should be no sound, not even that of closing doors or windows. Meditation should not be stopped all on a sudden, but gradually and slowly. After meditation, take one or two ounces of hot milk or coffee or other liquid food, but never any solid food. Never speak of the Ishtadevata or the Mantra to others. Any name of God secretly and sacredly uttered is a Mantra. Sri Ramaya Namah; Sri Krishnaya Namah, are all Mantras.

Be regular in the practice of meditation and the worship of your Ishtadevata. That is the first thing to

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be done in the morning when you get up. On some days you get concentration easily, on others, not. When the body and the mind are in the normal state, free from agitation, the mind gets concentrated. Even when it does not do so, be regular, continue sitting; say, mentally, 'whether I get concentration or not, I will meditate' and try to meditate. Pray to God for Sraddha and Bhakti. When you have got these, meditation has become successful.

Meditate in any part of the body you like. The Ishtadevata should be seen in front of you. According to the orthodox fashion the Rishi, Chandas etc., have to be repeated before you commence mantra japa. To see a King you have, first of all, to get the favour of his attendants. But when once you have become acquainted with the King, they salute you and let you pass without any trouble. So when once you can get concentration as soon as you sit for meditation, no formalities need be observed. That is what Sri Ramakrishna meant by saying "Sandhya ends in Gayatri, Gayatri in Om and Om in Samadhi."

A Nambudiri gentleman asked the Swami in Sanskrit:

How can Samsara be got rid of?

Swamiji:—By the attainment of true knowledge.

Q. How can knowledge be obtained?

A. By being established in Sādhana-chatushtaya faith in the words of the Guru and the Shastras.

Q. How can all that be had?

A. By the grace of God.

Q. What is the means of getting His grace?

A. There is no formal means to attain grace. It is unconditional. Pray to Him sincerely, and you may get it.

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Q. When will all doubts be removed?

A. When He is seen. Try to see Him who is far and near. All doubts vanish when He is seen.

Q. What is Maya?

A. Maya is Prakriti. Iswara is the Lord of Prakriti. Jiva, Iswara and Brahman are all really one. There is air in the room, there is air outside it, and there is the all-pervading air. They are all really one and the same air. Limitation makes the difference

Swamiji asked the gentleman to be present if he conveniently could, at the question class proposed to be held in the local Government High School, that evening. The gentleman came. Swamiji welcomed him. "Come, Come" he said in Sanskrit. "Pray be seated. A wooden seat is always pure." The gentleman sat on a bench. The gathering was pretty large. Swamiji was requested to give a short description of Aryadharma.

Aryadharma.

There are various theories regarding the Aryans, their original abode and their religion. The views of western scholars are themselves mutually conflicting. We cannot accept their conjectures which are opposed to the evidence furnished by Vedic texts. For instance, the European scholars, and following them, some of our own people, are of opinion that the religion of the Vedic Aryans was Nature-worship. But look at the Vedic Mantras: "Indram, Mitram, Varunam x x Ēkam Sad Vipra Bahudha Vadanti." These, clearly are not the words of Nature Worshippers. They do not imply polytheism, either. The conception of the Rishis was much more exalted than that. It was a high monotheism, it was monism pure and indisputable. One of the earliest upanishads has the Mantra, "Pooshan Ekarshe Yama Surya Prajapathya x x x So'ham asmi."

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'O Sun, offspring of Prajapati, Thou lonly courser of the Heaven, Thou controller and supporter of all, contract Thy rays, withdraw Thy light. Through Thy grace, I behold the most blessed form of Thine. I am indeed He, that Being who dwells there.'

This mantra beautifully expresses the realisation of the Rishi that the light in the sun, the effulgence that is manifesting itself through the sun, is the same as what is being manifested in and through the human mind.

Going through the Vedas we see that all the forms of Hinduism developed later on as Dwaita, Visishtadwaita and Adwaita are already there, existing in perfect harmony, beginning with Dwaita, progressing into Visishtadwaita and culminating in Adwaita. This is also the natural order of progress of the human mind in the realisation of the spirit. Each of the three Acharyas, Sri Sankara, Sri Ramanuja and Sri Madhwa emphasised each of these stages. Every one of them based his teaching on the self-same Vedas. They were fully justified in doing so. We must never forget that these forms are not mutually contradictory, but are complimentary and that they mark the different stages in the natural development of the human mind in the field of practical religion.

The Smritis came later. They are not meant to be the same for all time, like the Sruthi, but change with changing times. Each age or yuga has its own Smriti. The one for this Kaliyuga is said to be that of Parasara. Acharas also change with time and place. The Acharas of the Brahmins near the Himalayas are not the same as those of the Brahmins in Kerala. There, you will be shocked to see the priest in the temple wearing a coat! What would you think of a priest having a coat on and performing puja in a Kerala Temple? Sacrilege! You would cry. But in the Himalayas, the cold is so intense that you cannot

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expose your body and you have therefore to cover it with a coat. But all Brahmins, whether they be in the Himalayas, or in Kerala or anywhere else have the same Gayatri, the same Sandhya. They are based on the Sruti. The principles are the same for ever. Acharas differ with time and place. It is the principles found in the Vedas and Upanishads that constitute Aryadharma.

Local Acharas should not be accepted as authority unless they conform to the injunctions of the Shastras. 'Shastra is Pramana' (authority) says Krishna to Arjuna. Your golden Pavithram (finger-ring) is not orthodox. Kusanguleeyam (ring made of Kusa grass) is the real pavithram. The golden one came into vogue when the Brahmins grew rich. Why is copper considered sacred? Because it was the first metal known to our ancestors. Why are wool and silk holy? Because they came first, before the weaving of cotton clothes. Also because of the climate of the Himalayas where the early Aryans lived. Suddhi (purification) is not by water alone. "Mri Jalabhyam Suddhih." Agni is considered and used as a purifier. In the deserts of Rajaputana the fine golden sand is used for the purpose. Really speaking our body can never become pure.

Ameddhyapurne Krimijalasamkule
Swabhava durgandha niramtharamthare
Kalebare Moothrapureesha bhavite
Ramanthi Moodhah viramamthi panditah.

So Manassudhi is the essential thing. "Aharasuddhow satwasuddhih" says the Sruti. What is the Ahara? That which is gathered in by the senses—says Sankaracharya. It is not merely the material food taken in. So we should take care to see that only pure impressions are gathered in by our senses. That will give us mental purity which in turn will lead to realisation.

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Even a spiritual aspirant should take good care of the body. Remember the example given by Sri Ramakrishna. The mould should be well-formed and taken good care of until the molten metal is poured in. The body is the mould and the purified mind the molten metal. He has also compared the body to a box containing a precious jewel. The box is taken care of, not because of its intrinsic worth, but because of the jewel it contains. The Atman is that jewel. "What is this body? An impure and perishable thing". This sort of Vairagya should come after realisation, not before it. We need not become Sandows and Ramamurthis. But we should have normal health. Physical exercise we should take, but not overmuch. Bodily development should go hand in hand with mental development.

Before retiring for rest that day Swamiji said:

Sadhu-mela: Guru-puja.

This is the day of the great Himalayan festival, Sadhu-mela. This is the one day in the year in which we can worship the Shivalingam at Amaranath. On all other days it will be covered with ice. If you miss this day, you will have to wait one whole year.

The Maharaja of Kashmere provides for the comfort of all the pilgrims who number about twenty to thirty thousand. Roads are constructed at every stage of the journey and new villages are formed. It is a moving mass of villages. Every class and sect of Hindus you will find in that mela, Shaivites, Vaishnavas, Saktas, Vairagis, young, old, rich, poor, high, low, all kinds and sorts of men and women belonging to the Hindu fold. This is a great day for all Hindus, not for the Brahmins alone. This is also the day of Guru-puja for all Sadhus in India.

At the close of the days loving work and as he was retiring for rest, was Swamiji thinking of Sri Sriguru Maharaj, when he uttered these words? Was he alluding, unconsciously though, to the advent of Sri Ramakrishna and to this age when every Hindu is given the

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rare privilege of worshipping Amaranath? Did he also suggest that those who missed this opportunity will have to wait for His next Incarnation?

Q. What is the nature of the soul?

Soul - its Nature and Existence - Realisation.

A. No amount of description of the sweetness of sugar will make you feel or understand it until you have tasted it for yourself. The nature of the soul can never be really known until you have realised it. So exert yourself to obtain realisation. Do not waste time in vain discussion.

Q. How can we prove the existence of the soul.

A. Our methods of reasoning are able to prove only limited, material things which come within the range of our perception. Even among them, there are some whose existence cannot be demonstrated. How, then, can we prove the existence of the soul which is not material and is beyond the reach of the senses. You have to realise it. The means of realisation are Sravana, Manana and Nididdhyasana. "Atma va are drishtavyah, Srotavyo, Mantavyo, nididdhyasitavyah" says the Sruti. The Atman should be realised. Hear, think and meditate upon it.

Q. Is belief in the transmigration of souls necessary for salvation.

A. No, realisation alone is necessary. That alone can lead to Mukti.

Q. Only one in thousands says that he has realised the soul. So how can we believe in it.

A. Napoleon was only one in thousands! Do you not believe that he existed. A single Napoleon proves the possibility of any man becoming a Napoleon. Now look at creation,

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look at a tree! How many leaves there are in it! How many of them become flowers? How many of the flowers become fruits? How many of the fruits go to ripeness. Similarly, one in a million becomes a ripe soul. Again take the case of a man. He comes into the world as a baby, becomes a child, a boy, a young man and so on. So is the difference between man and man. One is a baby, another is a ripe soul.

(From Prabuddha Keralam, Vol. II. p. 75.)

Place:—Alwaye. Date Nov. 1916.

Different Paths.

Swamiji.—The Vedas, the Puranas and the Tantras lay down the paths leading God-ward; with regard to certain doctrine all these scriptures agree; with regard to others they differ widely. The differences are due to the differences in the tendencies and temperaments of men. You see Satwa guna predominating in some persons, Rajas in others and Tamas in yet others. Can there be any one path, one set of rules, perfectly suiting all these various types? In the nature of things, there cannot be.

Take the Vaishnavas, for instance. Krishna, the Lover, appeals to some of them. Some others adore the Baby Krishna lying on the Aswatha-leaf. Neither of these conceptions satisfies a third set of devotees. They are of a heroic temperament. An awe-inspiring God of Power is their ideal, and they, therefore worship, say, the Narasimha form. Yet, you will admit, the end attained, by all of these is the same God. Take, again, the case of Shaivas. Some adore Him in His contemplative mood as the Sadashiva, lost in eternal meditation. The same God as the Nataraja, the Dancer, beneath whose tread the whole earth trembles, is the ideal of another set of devotees. Worshippers of the Mother also exhibit the same divergence in the conception of their ideal. Mother as Kanya or Uma is the Ishtam of a certain type, Kali

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the Destroyer of world-systems alone commands the whole-souled adoration of another type; now, which of these several methods of approach, is right; are some alone right and the others wrong? It is only a matter of choice; each one choosing what befits his character and taste.

Suppose you have four or five children. To each one of them you give a certain amount of money to buy what they like most. Would they all bring in the same articles? Certainly not. One might purchase a toy-soldier with a gun on his shoulder, another a pot-bellied Ganesha, the third a dog, the fourth, a different article, and so on. That will depend on the tendencies of the children. So it is with the ways and means prescribed by the scriptures, whether they be Vedic, Puranic or Tantric. As many natures, so many paths.

Ishtam.

Your GOD is of your nature. If you have a liking for *payasam*, you take it that your God also likes it. If you are a hunter and a meat-eater your God will have good meat offered to Him. The Bhakta's tastes and habits determine his God's Naivedyam. Has Shiva or Vishnu ever appeared before any Bhakta and demanded this food or that? Does it make any difference to him whether you offer him milk or meat? One can never say that the one is good and the other is bad. Have faith in the words of the Guru and strive incessantly to reach your goal.

Guru and Disciple.

A true Guru perceives the Samskaras of the disciples and sets them on their respective paths. If a disciple can do so for himself, he has no need of guru, at all. But, he cannot. Now-a-days there are self-styled gurus by the hundreds. For a Dakshina of Rs. five they give the disciples visions of light by pressing and rubbing the eyeballs. If the vision of the light could be had so cheap, it were foolish to go through austerities and do hard tapasya. But eye-rubbing avails not, steadfast devotion,

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intense yearning, alone counts. Love alone matters. Haven't you heard of Kannappa Nayanar who plucked out his eyes and offered them to his Beloved Lord?

Q. Do concrete objects merely symbolise abstract ideas or have they a value and power of their own?

A. The question is irrelevent. In either case, they are both to be accepted; both lead us to the same goal.

Ideas and Symbols.

Whether Sushumna and Sura are mere symbols expressing certain ideas, or whether they have an objective value is such an irrelevent question. The very fact of questioning implies doubt and want of faith. Accept the words of the Guru and follow his advice. That is all one has to do to reach the goal. Speaking of Sura, I am reminded of a great Siddha I have known. He took Sura not as an intoxicant, not as liquor. He had great faith in the words of the Shastras regarding Sura and he reaped the fruit assured by the Shastras. If one's sole object is to get intoxicated, let him drink to his heart's content. But why should he drag in the name of religion? Why degrade a religious rite? If he has real faith, let him take sura as sura, otherwise let him take liquor as liquor. It is sincerity and faith that is wanted in all matters. The words of the sages and Sidhapurushas are always true. There is no question of their partial acceptance and partial rejection by us.

Place—Kottayam. Date—Nov. 1916.

(P. K. Vol. II. p. 98.)

Swamiji—Well, What topic shall we have to-day?

One of the audience—Let it be "What do we want?"

S. S.—Oh!

(To one among the audience.) What do you want?

Answer — Social Reform.

(To another.) And you?

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Answer -- Religious Propaganda.

The question was put to a few others and they all gave different answers.

Swamiji (smiling) -- Now, you see, each one answers the question differently, what you want is not what the other questioner wants. How, then, can I speak of a common want? Yet, if you look under the surface, you will see an element common to all -- a generic want. It is the desire for welfare, happiness. Take any action and analyse it. You will find that at the bottom of it was the quest for happiness. That is the motive force behind every act.

You know that this is the age of material science, And what are the scientifically advanced nations doing? Fighting for self-aggrandisement. And India? She has been the victim and the witness of attack upon attack of hordes and hordes of greedy barbarous people, and where are they now? They have vanished leaving their names in books of history, whereas India is still alive and she will live for ever. Why so? Because of the vitality of her life-current. Each nation has its own special life-current. When that fails to function, the nation dies; for India, it is Religion. All other matters are secondary. The way of life of other peoples may be summed up as six days' work and one day's rest. The Indian knows no rest. Every sun-rise, every sun-set, finds him at his worship. Other religionists who have settled down in India have imbibed the Indian spirit more or less. Don't you see that our Christian friends are mostly Hinduised Christians. With us, religion is the primary concern of life; material prosperity is only secondary. What material civilization brings in its wake is only too patent to us now. The present world war is its monstrous offspring. Victory by hook or by crook is its sole aim. There had been wars in Ancient India also. But they were waged quite on different lines. Their standards were Dharmic. The Kshatriyas took up arms as a glorious duty. Fair fight and fight during day

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time was the rule. After nightfall, the opposing parties even mingled together as comrades-in-arms. We see that from the history of the Maha-Bharata War. As opposed to Dharma-Yuddha was Koota-Yuddha, Demoniac War, which is what we find so zealously practised to-day. Our education began with uttering and writing the name of the Lord Hari. Your western system begins with A and ends with SS. The two are fundamentally different. Twelve years' training in a Gurukula made real men of the pupils, men who could control their minds. Even Maharajas were no exception to this. Look at Parikshit. He heard and knew it for certain that he was to die on the 7th day. Fearless, unmoved, he devoted the remaining days to thoughts of God and heard Sri Bhagavata. Death had no terrors for him. Such self-possession and self-control should be the aim and result of any education, worth the name. The greatness of a country lies not in its having wealthy citizens, but in its producing real Mahatmas who have attained peace and happiness eternal. Think not for a moment that wars of conquest in which countless lives are sacrificed would, even if successful, give lasting peace and prosperity to any Nation.

Religion is the core of our Nation. But we have to learn other things as well. Knowledge is of two kinds. Para and Apara. Para, higher, is knowledge divine; Apara, lower, is knowledge of mundane things. The knowledge of both should go hand in hand. It was because both these were imparted in the old Gurukulas that the pupils became ideal citizens and house-holders. These house-holders, having the requisite dispassion and discrimination, gave up their homes and became Sanyasins or ascetics in later life. The more a Society produces such noble souls, the more will it flourish and do good to humanity. If you want to be real men and lead noble lives, you have to follow that path. But what is our present condition? We have turned our gaze westward. Consciously and unconsciously we are imitating the westerners. There is very little in common between

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us and our ancestors. Our education is primarily responsible for this change. But I should not be understood to say that we should not adopt reforms and changes suited to the times. Nay, such reforms and changes are indispensable, if we are to keep pace with the times. But their acceptance should not make us lose sight of our supreme goal. Suppose, to-day you become as great as the European Nations, do you imagine you can be happy to-morrow? No, never. Applied material sciences alone cannot make you happy. You have to adapt your ancient customs and practices so modified as to fit in with the modern enlightened conditions. Our decline began the day we took to copying foreign customs and manners. Adaptation may be necessary in certain matters. But we should take care that it does not run counter to our Aryan ideals of Dharma.

Place :—Quilon. Date—Nov. 1916.

(P. K. Vol. II, p. 84.)

Swadharma—Karma Yoga.

Some people believe that the due performance of one's Swadharma is itself worship of God. The work they do is not for themselves but for God. They hold nothing as their own. A rich man engages a servant to look after his garden. The duty of the servant is only to take care of it. He has no right to regard the garden as his own. If the owner damages or destroys any of the plants, he has no cause for grief or complaint. Similarly, this world is God's garden. Everything in it belongs to Him only. We are mere servants appointed to look after the garden. There is nothing here which we can call our own. Even our wives and children are not really ours. They are all God's. They are placed under our charge as long as it pleases Him and they are taken away at His will and pleasure. What right have we to rejoice or bemoan? Work in this spirit becomes worship of God. This is the secret of Karma Yoga.

One's conception of Atman depends on the development of one's mind. The conception of every one will

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Atman.

be found true when viewed from his particular stand point. We see the sun rising. To us, standing on the earth, it appears as a small disc of gold. Suppose we go up on an aeroplane and proceed nearer and nearer the sun. The view of the same sun will be different to us at different stages of our journey. The sun does not change; it is our view point that causes the change of appearance. The case of the Atman also is more or less the same. An uncultured man (with a gross mind) may regard the body as the Atman. But the body changes, it dies. His Atman then becomes a changeful and mortal entity which it really is not. Some others (with finer perceptions) may regard the aggregate of sense organs as Atman. Neither are these organs immune from change and destruction. They cannot, therefore, be the eternal Atman. Yet others (with still higher perceptions) conceive of the mind as Atman. The mind too is changeable, undergoes modification under the influence of certain drugs and in other ways. Neither the mind, therefore, is the Atman. The mind is material. But owing to the presence of the Atman behind it, it appears as partaking of some of its characteristics. The light of a lamp appears to us as modified by its chimney. The mind is, as it were, the chimney covering the Atman. The light of the Atman comes to us only through, and as conditioned by, the covering chimney, the mind. We then mistake the mind itself as the Atman. A ball of iron put into fire and made red-hot appears as a ball of fire. In like manner, the mind too, by reason of its proximity to the Atman partakes more of its characteristics. None of these conceptions are absolutely true. Each one is determined by the development of the mind conceiving it and each one is true to the extent it goes.

The Salt-doll.

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna used to give us an interesting parable to illustrate this. There was a salt-doll. Once it chanced to hear about the ocean and desired very much to see it. So it

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went out in search of it and reaching the shore, it was struck with wonder at its vastness and grandeur. It then wanted to know what the ocean was made of. Approaching the water, and tasting a few drops, it came to know that the ocean was composed of the same substance as itself. But it was not satisfied with this knowledge and wanted to probe the depth of the ocean. So it stepped into the water. As it advanced, it found itself dissolving in the ocean. The more it advanced the more it dissolved. Ultimately it became completely merged and one with the ocean. We have many things to learn from this illustration. So long as we are not aware of the existence of the ocean of Sachidananda we go about infatuated with sense pleasures. But when we come to know that such a thing exists, there arises in us a desire to see it. Once this desire arises, we won't rest content until it is actually realised. As the result of our exertion we reach the shores of that ocean. Up to this we are in the Dwaita state. We then taste its drops and realise that though different in form, we are made of the same stuff as the ocean. This is the Visishtadwaita stage. Once we taste it, the desire to probe its depth becomes irresistible and we advance into the ocean. And, like the salt-doll, the farther we go, the more we get dissolved, until at last, we completely lose our identity and become one with it. This is Adwaita, oneness. That is our real nature.

Christianity and the Eastern Countries.

Christianity is indeed a grand religion. Bethelhem was in a degenerated and deplorable condition. The advent of an Avatar then became imperative. So, the Lord incarnated Himself there as Jesus Christ. He had only 10 or 12 disciples who were all uncultured fishermen. They could not fully understand his teachings. Later on, these teachings fell into the hands of intellectuals who interpreted them in their own way and to suit their own ends. You can never nnderstand the high ideals of Christ unless

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you approach them in the old oriental spirit. Christ himself was an oriental. It was the orientals - not the occidentals -- that first observed the stars rising at the time of his birth ; they sought him and worshipped him. Religion is inherent in the oriental. To the westerner, it is a means of 'getting on' in life. A true Hindu falls prostrate before Christ. A picture of Jesus Christ kept by Sri Ramakrishna in his room is preserved there even to-day. Christ never taught proselytisation. Every one, according to him, had the right to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. You know that the Bible is being amended or altered from time to time. If it is Christ's words that are recorded in the Bible, who has the right to alter them ? And why are they altered, unless it be to suit the selfish ends of those who have taken up religion as a means of livelihood. You, easterners, are more competent than the westerners to grasp the ideals of the Bible. They can never understand them so well as you do. It would do you much good to read the Imitation of Christ.

Place :—Trivandrum. Date-22nd September 1917.

(P. K. Vol. III. p. 21.)

Q. We have heard much of Swami Vivekananda. We should like to hear somethihg about him from Swamiji also.

Swami Vivekananda.

S :—Oh ! What shall I say about him. You have already heard that he was a Hindu Sanyasin, that he went to America, that he spoke about Hinduism at the World's Parliament of Religions held in America. Before the Swami went there, the Americans had many false notions regarding Indians. They believed that the Hindus were an uncivilised people, superstitious, half-naked and little removed from beasts. Swamiji's lectures have removed those notions and awakened in them an interest in Hindu Religion. Several eminent persons have begun to accept Hindu ideas.

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Q. How old was Swami Vivekananda when he met Sri Ramakrishna and how long did he live with the Master?

A. Swamiji was a student then. He lived for about 6 or 7 years under Ramakrishna.

Q. What are your views regarding Varnashramadharma.

A. Varnashramadharma is good, if it is Shastric. But Varnasankara has corrupted it in South India. Not so in the North, where it follows the old lines, more or less. In North India, a Brahmin marries in his own caste only. If he takes a non-Brahmin woman as wife he loses caste. A Brahmin's son is a Brahmin. But, here you don't count a Brahmin's son as a Brahmin. Further, in N. India, Brahmins have the same Mantra for their marriage, Sraddha and other ceremonies. There is no fight between the castes.

Varnashrama Dharma

Q. Are followers of Varnashramadharma admitted into the fold of the Ramakrishna Mission ?

A. Certainly. The mission does not ask any one to stray from his own path. A man may be of any Varna, Ashrama, Caste, creed or religion. Only he should be sincere, unselfish and loving: That is all what is wanted of him. In short he must lead a pure life.

Q. How is it possible to look upon all communities with an equal eye and at the same time keep Varnashramadharma ?

A. Why, what is the difficulty. Haven't you heard:

Brahmanosya Mukham Aseed
Bahoo Rajanyah Kritah.
Oorootadasya Yadvaisyah
Padbhyam Soodro' Jayata.

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(The Brahmin was born of the face of the Virat-purusha, the Kshatrya of his arms, the Vaisya of his thighs and the Sudras of his feet.) The different Varnas are, therefore, as the different limbs of the Virat-purusha. For a man to be quite well and happy, one and all of the limbs of his body should work harmoniously, in close co-operation with one another. Similarly, for a society to be healthy, strong and happy, the different divisions comprising it should all co-operate harmoniously. Each limb, each organ, is great in its own place. The head cannot perform the functions of the feet, nor the feet those of the head. Suppose a thorn gets stuck in your foot. How anxiously the head feels for it and how readily and willingly the hand works to take it out. The limbs do not exchange or usurp one another's places or functions. Each is great and useful where it is. It should be just so with the Varnas. The higher castes ought to sympathise with and love the lower ones as equal parts of the same body. That is the real Varnashramadharma. It does not mean that you should interdine or intermarry with other castes. That is opposed to true Brahminhood and may be productive of great harm. Brahmins' marriage should be confined to their own Varna. That will benefit the Varna and the Society at large. You Nambudiris love the young women in other Varnas, but not the men in them. The men you hate. You should cease to do so.

Q. What can be done when Achara stands in the way of one's loving all Varnas?

A. Achara will never stand in the way. But, then, Achara is of two kinds, Desachara (local customs) and Shastrachara (conduct enjoined by scripture), Desachara may, sometimes, be a hindrance. But when Desachara conflicts with Shastrachara, the former should be discarded, and the latter followed. Desacharas are enjoined by certain Smritis which are themselves contradictory. They are the work of selfish people. True Varnashramites should not accept them.

Acharas.

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Q. How then are we to decide as to which Smriti is to be accepted and which to be rejected ?

A. It is not difficult at all. "Sruti Smriti Puraneshu Virodho Yatra drisyate, tatra srautam pramanam tu."

Scriptural authority is threefold, Sruti, Smriti and Puranas. Of these, Sruti is supreme. Wherever the others are found going against the Sruti, they should be rejected. Of the Puranas, 18 are important. Among the Smritis, those of Manu, Yajnavalkya, Bodhayana and Parasara are the most authoritative. Even Upanishads are many. But only eleven of them have been unanimously recognised as authority. Do you now see that Acharas cannot be opposed to Brahminhood and Varnashramadharma ?

Q. Yes, it is now clear to us. But does not Sankara Smriti find a place of importance among the Smritis.

A. I do not understand what you mean by Sankarasmriti. I can't bring myself to believe that Adi-Sankaracharya wrote a Smriti. He taught pure Adwaita and devotion to God. He never dealt with Karmakanda. It is impossible to think of him as diverting his energies to produce a Smriti and lay down Acharas, queer and unheard of anywhere else. Your Sankarasmriti is the work of some clever self-seekers, who have fathered it upon that venerable Sanyasin.

Sankara.

(P. K. Vol. III. p. 81.)

Prabuddha Keralam Office, Trivandrum.

Date—1918.

Q.—We hear Swamiji is going to Cape Camorin ; why do you go there ?

A. To see the Mother. I am the Mother's son, and I should therefore visit Her.

Q. Since God is omnipresent, should one go to a temple to worship God ?

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A. Water is all-pervading. Yet you can't get water here—draw it from this room. For that you have wells and tanks from which you can get it as and when you please. Even so are temples. Holy thoughts are stored up there, and they are therefore fit places for worship.

Use of Temples.

Q. But why should Swamiji want temples?

A. I may have my own well. But does it preclude me from using another's, if he allows it and if I am so minded. The present condition of the temples is, however, deplorable. The priests have neither faith nor purity. They are mere merceneries. They pass the night with a mistress, get up in the morning and take a plunge in the tank and go to the temple to perform the worship. Even while doing Pushpanjali (placing flowers at the feet of the Deity) their mind and eyes are directed towards women coming to the temple! To the non-Brahmins they don't *give* prasadam, but they *throw* it to them. They should be whipped and driven out to restore the purity of the temples.

Q. May not politics be included in religion?

A. Religion is the science of the relation between Soul and God. Whatever helps the knowledge of that relation may come under religion. Politics does not do it. It is the science of the relation between the ruler and the ruled. It has, therefore, no connection with the religion.

Religion and Politics.

Q. Is it justifiable for a man to go to a forest and do penance for his own good? Is it not highly selfish?

A. Suppose there are four or five boys of whom one alone learns his lessons regularly and comes out successful in the examination. The others waste their time in play and blame the former, telling him: "you don't keep us company in our plays, you only mind your lessons. What a selfish boy you are!" Is the reproach justifiable?

Social Service and Sadhana in solitude.

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Q. But, Swamiji, who is the greater man, one who works for Society or one who repairs to the forest and does penance ?

A. How can I, a mere beggar help another beggar? If I earn some money I shall be able to help some hungry people. Having earned it, if, I refuse to help the needy, I may be called selfish. That poor man doing penance and worshipping God is trying to acquire spiritual wealth to help the spiritually poor. You talk tall of social reform. Can you show me a single man who works altruistically for social reforms without, at the same time, keeping his own gain or name in the forefront ? Is there a single man who can lay his hands on his heart and say boldly and sincerely that he lives only for the society, that he feels the society's woes as his own ? My good friends! I have much more experience of the world than you. I have travelled from the Himalayas to the Cape Camorin and I have come into close contact with the people in all conditions. I have not seen many who work for the society except it be with some selfish motive, name or gain or position. I know your householders. They draw large salaries, look after their wives and children, which, they fancy, is their sole duty in life. Their neighbours may be dying of hunger. That is God's will; they will talk and pose themselves as great social reformers. If you go to these Kuberas for help in any good cause; say, the education of poor students or the feeding of the poor, they are ever ready with an excuse, there is the war, the crops have failed, the times are very hard. All the time, you will note that the bodies of their wives are covered, as it were, with the yellow metal. These, you call social reformers! If the Swami Vivekananda had not become a Sanyasin, but had accepted some office with a fat salary and lived the life of a householder, could he have done anything for the good of the world ? World-history will teach you that the benefactors to the world have been Sanyasins. Their retreat to forests and caves is to acquire

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the requisite power. Think for a moment and you will see that the life of a great man, an honest, just and devout man, in any country, is a great blessing to his countrymen. So, now, you understand that a man striving to perfect himself is not necessarily selfish. Trying to do good to another without having the power to do so brings more harm than good. Suppose there is a plant with a fence around it to protect it from cattle. A goat comes up to the fence and failing to reach at the plant, addresses it thus: "Oh! plant! how intensely selfish you are! You keep yourself secure behind the fence and think nothing of doing me any good. But for that fence, what nice food you would have been to appease my hunger." The plant fails to be of present good to the goat. It grows. The fence disappears. In course of time, the plant becomes a very big tree with many a branch and twig and foliage, it affords shelter, leaves and fruits, not only to the goat, but to a large number of birds, beasts and men. Had it sacrificed itself to the goat, would it have been able to do the great good that it is now doing?

(P. K. Vol. III p. 120.)

Place:—Quilon. Date—1st October 1918.

Swamiji returned from Trivandrum to-day. Many Bhaktas came to see him. Mr. Raman Pillai, Manager of the Ramakrishna Weaving Works, Onattukara, also came at 8 P.M. In the course of conversation it was mentioned that the High School at Mannar was proposed to be raised to a College. Swamiji said:—

The Present System of Education.

The present system of education is quite unsuited to the times. Its sole aim is to enable you to earn a living. But does it answer the purpose? They cram certain books, get through examinations and then join the army of Vakils or Teachers or Clerks. How few places are there where you can earn a decent living! Posts carrying a fixed salary are very limited. A

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small minority of the educated fill them up. What is the majority to do? Enter the army of Vakils. And how expensive too! Having entered the profession, their troubles multiply. Some Vakils, I hear, have hit upon a very good plan. Finance the litigants and recover the amounts at the time of harvest. Can't you see how it fosters false litigation?

Industrial Development.

You get no technical or industrial education, that is what the times require! It is the Almighty Dollar that rules this Yuga, not Brahmatejas or Kshatra Virya. They had their days and those days are gone. Now, unless you are economically strong, you can't be free. Develop your industries, become a wealthy nation, then and then alone, Home rule or Independence will be yours without your having to ask for it. Until then you will remain slaves. Do you not remember it, the Government imposed a duty on cotton goods. Manchester protested and carried the day. Now America has become immensely rich. She lends money to all other nations. She has got the upper hand, and, after the war, she will be leading them as she pleases. If you want to rise in the scale of nations, you must shed your poverty and mount the economic ladder. Otherwise, your clamour will simply be a cry in the wilderness. Are you now being equipped for that? Not at all! How much intelligence our boys are made to waste in learning what, after all, will be of no use to them in life. They have to study so many books in geometry. What the centre of a circle is, they can learn in a moment. But what time they take to learn the definition by heart. Hours and hours they read geography to understand the physical features of a country. If they had a relief map they could know all that in a few minutes. Again, take the case of history. Aurangazib ascended the throne in such and such a year. He had so many sons. Such and such a battle was fought in such and such

Political Freedom.

Intellectual Waste.

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a year. Is this all history? My goodness! It is all dry dust. True history concerns itself with the life of the people, the condition of Society, how beliefs, customs and manners change and evolve, how societies progress and decay. Do your history-graduates know anything about all these. Take any branch of knowledge, you will see that what is imparted is not vitalising instruction but deadening lead weight. And, yet, people are running mad after it. The High School should be raised to the status of a College! We are prepared to spend five lakhs for it. Do you know its secret? The Nair Service Society! Oh! what wonderful work it does! You see, it owns a College! Hankering after this name and fame! Nothing else. Is this social service? Who can serve? Can a beggar give alms. The social service of most of our present day leaders is mere paint and varnish. Scratch it, you will find only self-interest. If any one in India can be said to be really doing some social service, it is that great man, Mahatma Ghandhi.

Your leaders pose as great reformers. An open coat, a collar and a neck tie make you a civilised gentleman. So far, so good. But along with it, have real reform also. That, our leaders will not have. They just put on the cloak of social service and cover their weaknesses and selfishness. Every man has his weakness. A Sanyasin may have a hundred ones. But the difference is this. The Sanyasin knows them, and does not try to hide them. Instead of concealing, he goes on struggling to overcome them. He never wishes to appear other than what he really is. If I could hide my shortcomings and pose as a great Sadhu, I could have captivated you all and thousands besides. Perhaps you heard somebody asking me last time, why I smoked. What did I answer? "Sir, you see but this weakness in me. I have several others. I know them and I am trying to get rid of them."

The Brahmins of the Vedic period became gradually engrossed in sacrifices and rituals. Thereby their wordly

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power waxed, but their spirituality waned. That spirituality and Brahminhood were imbibed and nourished by the Kshatriyas. There was a clash between the two Varnas. Parasurama's was a time of struggle between these two powers. He fought twenty one times and destroyed even the Kshatriya boys in Bharathavarsha. Their women folk fled from the houses and took refuge in the Ashramas of Brahmin ascetics. Many of them were pregnant. Parasurama went to those Ashramas enquiring if there were Kshatriyas there. The ascetics were in dilemma. They could not speak an untruth. But if they told the truth, destruction was certain. They steered a middle course and said "we have only Kayasthas (those inside the body) here." Parasurama went his way, without waiting to enquire into the etymology or meaning of the word. The babes born of them are said to be the Kayasthas of Bengal. They were brought up by the Brahmin ascetics. But there were none to confer upon them former Kshatriyahood by performing the ceremonies befitting the Kshatriya caste.

By the time of Sri Rama, Kshatriyas grew spiritually stronger. Hearing of Rama's breaking the Shaiva bow, Parasurama became red with anger. He went to Rama and challenged him to string the Vaishnava bow, on pain of death. Rama did so and drawing an arrow asked Parasurama to show him the aim as the drawn arrow could not but be directed against a target. The result was that Parasurama lost the heavens he had acquired by his penance. Thus Sri Rama established the spiritual supremacy of the Khatriyas. And you see, thereafter, the Brahmins going to the Kshatriyas for spiritual knowledge. Suka, the son of the great Brahmin sage Vyasa, sat at the feet of King Janaka. Bhishma was the spiritual teacher of many a Brahmin, and there are several such instances. But with the march of time, the power of the Kshatriyas also declined. It passed to the Vaisyas. This transfer and Vaisya domination is noticeable more in foreign countries than in India. The might of Vaisya Dharma—trade, commerce, industry etc.—

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rules the modern world. Why did the English and other foreigners come to India ? For moksha or for Vaisya-Vritti ? Why did they fight ? For upholding Dharma or for advancing their trade? Look at any nation who has come up. You will see that it is their extreme cleverness in industry and trade that has brought them to the forefront. It is the might of the Vaisya that the west brings home to us. If you want to move with the times, you must also develop your Vaisya power. But, then, this Vaisya domination also must come to an end. It will be replaced dy Sudra rule. We have ample evidence of its rise. You see the labour movement growing in England. The clash between labour and capital betokens the dawn of the Sudra rule. I don't mean that all Sudras will be rulers. What is Sudrahood? It is nothing but service—labour. In the growing fight between capital and labour, you see capital going down day by day. The signs of labour coming up are already visible in India also. Those who have been trodden under foot and crawling on all fours have begun to raise their hood. Look at the non-Brahmin movement. Can it be for ever that one class of people should be the slaves of another class, receive their kicks, work for them day and night, suffer all sorts of hardship and carry them on their shoulders. That age cannot last much longer. The time is not far off when they also will stand up on their legs and assert their rights as men. Then the upper classes and their present day leaders will open their eyes and lament: "Oh! God! what a calamity has befallen us! How great we were! And now to submit ourselves to the very Sudras who were our slaves till yesterday!" When they open their eyes and awaken themselves to the grim reality, they will begin to get glimpses of the truth, to become spiritual and to regain their Brahminhood. Thus gradually the Brahmana-age will return and hold its sway in India. The wheel of time will thus go on revolving. Then the Sudra will be recognised

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as the feet of the Virat-Purusha. That is the place where one pays homage and does worship. Falling there alone you get real Bhakti; reaching that you get illumination.

(P. K. Vol. III. p. 146.)

Place:—Trivandrum. Date—Sept. 1918.

Q. Acharya Sankara says that the world is not real and that it is all a dream which we take to be real. If so, who is the dreamer? If it is really a dream how can the dreamer be in bondage? and how can there be cessation of this continuous dream?

Jnana Yoga and Mukti.

Swamiji:—Sankara's path of Jnana is very difficult to understand. Dreaming or awake, you have the 'I' consciousness. It is never absent. It is the same 'I' that dreams and that awakes. We see an unreal thing, take it as real and identify ourselves with it. It is this identification that causes bondage. You see a play, say Harischandra. The sorrows of Harischandra as expressed by the actor makes you feel sorry. Some even shed tears. Why? Because you identify yourselves with his sorrows. But then, if you are reminded that it is but a play, you feel ashamed at your weakness. If you witness the play as play, as it really is, you will not be identifying yourself with Harischandra, but you will be judging of the merits or otherwise of the actor and enjoying the acting. Just so it is with the world. We take the world as real and identify ourselves with it. That causes samsara and that is bondage. If, on the other hand you realise that it is not real, you become free. But this is rather difficult.

Q. All jivas attain liberation and Brahma cannot create a new jiva. Creation must then come to an end, though at a very distant date?

S: What folly! How can creation come to an end and how can jivas cease to exist? It can never

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be. Whatever exists has jiva ; only the degree of evolution differs. In man, the creative energy is highly manifested. Man can move about, think and speak. Birds and beasts can move about, but not think or speak. Worms can but crawl or creep. There are, yet, lower forms in the animal kingdom which remain stationery like inanimate objects, yet, live and eat and perform all other organic functions. Trees and plants form a still lower order. They are immovable and they inhale, exhale and take nourishment in a way different from that of animals. Yet lower come stones and rock. They also have a growth of their own. It is very very slow. Growth is a law of nature. It cannot be said that they have no jiva. Everything in the universe has jiva and each one is tending to come up to have fuller manifestation of energy. This coming up is what is called evolution.

End of Creation.

Q. It is said that no being comes forth without a fund of Karma at its back and it is also said that Brahma creates beings. How can the two statements be reconciled ?

S. That is the Puranic theory. I speak of the spiritual laws. Accept those portions of the Puranas which are in agreement with spiritual truth. Reject the others.

(P. K. Vol. III. p. 244.)

Place :—Prabuddha Keralam Office, Trivandrum.
Date—May 1918.

Q. How did the knowledge of the Atman arise in India alone, of all the countries in the world ?

A. It was not India alone that had the knowledge. Many other countries had it. But, in some, it was very imperfect.

Q. I have heard that it was after Swami Vivekananda went to America that the Westerners began to think about the Atman.

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A. Oh! No. It is not true; there was enquiry into the Atman even before Swamiji went there. But the enquiry took a different turn and aspect after he went there.

Another devotee:—Swamiji, we see that many Dharmas arose in this world. In course of time, some of them decayed and some ceased to exist. Is it not possible to establish an undecaying and ever-lasting Dharma?

Does Dharma Decay?

S. Dharma never decays, never dies. It is ever pure and eternal. Decay and destruction come to the channels through which the Dharma functions. For illustration, take a lamp. The wick burns brightly. But different chimneys make the same light appear differently. A spotless chimney gives you the whole light, clear and bright. A darkened, dirty, chimney makes it very dim. Has the light of the wick decayed? So, your question amounts to this: Is it not possible to have only good clean chimneys for all lamps always? Just consider if it is possible. Man is Dharma's chimney. It is through man that the light of Dharma shines. Man is always imperfect. For Dharma to shine perfectly well at all times, all men must, at all times, be perfect. It is the same as saying, creation must cease.

Q. In the Gita, pleasure and pain are likened to heat and cold. How does the comparison hold good?

The Gross and the Subtle.

A. Gita speaks not only of heat and cold and pleasure and pain, but of all pairs of opposites. They do not all relate to the self-same thing. The soul has the internal organ and the external coverings as its sheaths. They are called the causal, the subtle and the gross bodies. Environments affect both the external and internal sheaths. Heat and cold affect the body.

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Pleasure and pain affect the mind. Suppose I give you a blow with my hands. It affects your body. Can my hand similarly affect your mind? No, because, the hand, being gross, cannot act upon the mind which is subtle. To give pain to your mind, I must use a subtle weapon, say, unpleasant words. These modifications affect the sheaths only, not the Atman.

Q. What is the cause of birth?

A. Desire.

Q. What desire?

A. The desire to be born.

Q. Whence have I come?

A. From God.

Birth and its Cessation.

Q. I understand Swamiji to mean that so long as I feel myself separate from God and so long as I am in the world I may have desires, and desires for enjoyment bring on successive births. But, when I was one with God how could I have had the desire to be born, and how could I have been born at all. How can my very first birth be accounted for?

A. When you were one with God, there was no 'you.' You had no separate entity. There was neither you nor your desire. The desire then was God's. God desired to be born as you, to manifest himself as many.

Q. Then how can this birth and death be put an end to?

A. By desire. Desire to be one with God.

Q. Is there any connection with the desire and the Atman?

A. The Atman is ever pure and immutable. How can it have any desires? 'You' are a mere vehicle. Your body or mind is not the Atman. Desires are in the mind which is ever separate from the Atman.

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Q. Swamiji, what is birth? How does the pure and perfect Atman become the 'I' in this body as an imperfect being in bondage?

A. Verily, the Atman has no bondage, nor liberation. It is something like the Akasa. Have you differentiated the Akasa in this room from the Akasa outside? No, both are the same. But, as long as these walls are here, they limit the Akasa within. That is all.

Q. I don't understand it fully well. How, then, can I believe it as true?

The time Factor.

A. There comes the time-factor. Do you know what all things there are in the world which you have not known and which you cannot understand, even if explained to you? Can you deny the existence of a thing for the only reason that you do not know it or that you cannot understand it? Suppose you tell an illiterate man that there is such a thing as wireless telegraphy, and that by its means you can converse with another who may be thousands of miles away he may not believe you. You may not also be able to explain it all to him. Can you, for that reason, deny the existence of the wireless system. You must desire intensely. Then you will come to know. Like all other knowledge, this also has to be acquired. You cannot grasp it by a talk, or in a day. Intense desire to know is the root of all knowledge. That is admitted by all. 'Knock and it shall be opened. Seek and ye shall find,' says Christ also.

Desire to know

Q. We see many scholars well-versed in Vedantic scriptures quite worldly minded and sadly wanting in spirituality. Many illiterate people, on the other hand, are found to be highly devotional.

A. That is no wonder. Scholarship is one thing, spirituality quite another.

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Nayamatma Pravachanena labhyo
Na medhaya Na bahuna Srutena
Yamevaisha Vrinute tena labhyah
Tasyaisha Atma vivrunute tanum swam.

(This Atman cannot be attained by exposition, by power of understanding or by erudition. He whom the Atman chooses, unto him the Atman reveals itself.) So says the Upanishad. Intense Sraddha is what is wanted Sraddha alone is the means, not scholarship. Look at Sri Ramakrishna. What scholarship had he? He could hardly write his own name in his own language. Yet, the foremost Pandits of the day humbly sat at his feet and learnt their lessons.

Q. Would any one have desired to become a mere Pandit?

A. Why not? Without desire for realisation of the Atman, one could have desired to have knowledge of the Shastras.

Q. Are religion and Politics the same?

A. That depends upon the definition of the words. They are elastic. If one's definition of religion would include politics, why, to him they would be the same. To another they may differ.

Q. We see religion culminating in politics. In India itself, we have seen it. Many began with religion and ended in politics.

A. That is quite possible. But that does not establish a general rule. Extraneous causes might have brought about such a change. Christians have waged many bloody wars in the name of their religion. The teaching of Christ was forbearance—highly satwic. "Show your left cheek when you are smitten on the right." Can you therefore say that Christ's religion ended in cruelty, blood-shed?

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A. What extraneous cause could have contributed to that end? All religions have had that transformation. Did not Hindus, the followers of Sankaracharya, hate Buddhism and drive it out of India?

A. No, never. History does not support your view. It is quite untrue to say that persecution by the Hindus or by Sankaracharya drove Buddhism out of the land of its birth. No religion has died, or, ever can die on account of persecution by another. The fiercest wars ever waged were religious ones. Were religions killed thereby? If persecution could effect it, the great religion of Christ should have disappeared long ago. But no amount of persecution can destroy a religion. The more a religion is opposed and persecuted, the stronger it grows. That is the history of Christianity. That is again the history of Hinduism. What terrible onslaughts have been made on Hinduism? Did it die, or, did it every time grow stronger and mightier?

Q. How did Buddhism disappear from India?

A. Well, a thing grows in a congenial soil; in an uncongenial one, it perishes. For Buddha's religion, the Indian soil was uncongenial.

Q. Then how did it thrive here for two thousand years as history teaches us?

A. History, they say, is a helpless orphan. Do not take every book of history as gospel truth. Do not blindly believe every word of it. Granting that your statement is historically true, it does not falsify our position. A plant may live and grow in an uncongenial soil for some length of time. It need not die instantaneously. The cause may sometimes take years to appear as effect. There are certain poisons which take effect very very slowly. Germs of leprosy may get into a man's system. He may not show any signs of the disease, nor his son, nor his grandson. But, it appears in the seventh generation. Again, in America some colonists--all white men—married the natives--all

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black women. Their children, grand-children, great grand-children and so on, all had purely white skin, blue eyes and tawny hair. In the 7th generation, all on a sudden, appeared children with black skin--just like the aboriginals. This law has been observed to apply to the animal and vegetable kingdoms.

The gross cannot act upon the subtle. You can put a man's body in prison, but not his mind, unless you use subtle forces. Buddhism was never driven out. Not one who knows the rudiments of psychology will subscribe to that view. Persecution could have only invigorated it. Look at the history of Christianity and Hinduism. With sword in one hand and the Quran in the other did Muhammedanism threaten both. The most zealously faithful Emperor, Aurangazib snatched away the sacred threads of the Brahmins and heaping them like a hill offered them as an oblation to the fire god. Was it nourishing Hinduism? And what was the result? Instead of languishing or dying, Hinduism put forth new vigour and stood unconquerable, imperishable. So, don't believe that Buddhism was driven out. It simply could not grow here.

(P. K. Vol. III. 266)

Place :—Quilon. Date—May 1918.

Q. Swamiji, some say religion makes a man indolent. Is it true?

A. Not at all. One who has read a single page of history will not say such a foolish thing. Nothing makes man so enthusiastic, energetic and active as religion. The history of any religion will prove it. It is not religion, but science that makes us lazy. To go ten miles, we used our legs in old days, now we sit comfortably in a motor car. In scientifically advanced countries, machines do everything, cooking, serving, sweeping and all other domestic works. You have simply to sit quiet and enjoy. Now, which makes for laziness,

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Religion or Science? People will not pause to consider and think out a question. They get some smattering knowledge of something and straight away write a treatise on it. And there are a hundred thousand to pin their faith to every word in it. Are we to remain babes, all our lives? If you tell a child that a crow has flown away with its nose, the child may at once run after it. Are we such children? Religion, to make men lazy, indeed! It is the store-house of energy and activity.

Q. Is religion the goal of life or is it only a means to reach the goal?

A. It is neither the end nor the means; it is life itself. It is not your view of life as the Christians or Mahommedans would have it. To the Hindu, at any rate, religion is not a set of doctrines or opinions. It is life, existence, Dharma, neither a far off goal nor a way of reaching it. Religion is to life what light and heat are to fire. Light and heat are not the goal or means of fire. They are of the very nature of fire. Take them away, no fire remains. To us, life is Dharma, religion. The two cannot be separated. There can be no life without religion. Do you understand?

Q. Yes. Swamiji, I see it. But, some of our leaders say that the religion is but secondary and even unnecessary.

A. How foolish they are! and how dogmatic! To be able to assert that religion is a useless appendix, one must have known man and his life in all its innumerable aspects. Have they done so? Have they seen life through and through. What all things there are in life and in this world unknown to, and undreamt of, by these petty intellects. Yet, to declare like omniscient beings, that religion is unnecessary! What right have these egotists to assert things which they do not know. At the most they may say, "so far as we have known we do not find the utility of religion" Then we shall tell them, "friends,

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there are not a few things in this universe beyond your ken." But to the dogmatic, we can only say, "you are a learned fool, and a dangerous one, at that." How fares it now with the west which has been denying religion? Don't you see before your very eyes the ocean of blood made by those who have poo-poohed religion and staked their all on science?

Q. What is the difference between the Nirvana of the Buddhists and Moksha of the Hindus?

A. The one is positive, the other is negative. The Hindus posit something about Moksha, that it is freedom. About Nirvana, the Buddhist can only say Nethi, Nethi, not this, not this, but what is beyond. What the beyond is, they cannot say. Because, there, words do not go, nor the mind. The Vedatins accept both the positions.

(P. K. Vol. IV. p. 47.)

Place :—Trivandrum, Maharaja's College.

Date—Oct. 1918.

Q. Some Hindus worship images. Is it right?

A. It is not some Hindus alone that worship images, all religionists are image-worshippers. But Hindus alone have transcended image worship. By 'image', you mean a thing with a form. Can any of you think of anything without the help of a form? Take Love. Can you think of love in the abstract. The mention of love brings to you the form of one who loves or is loved. The images are symbols expressive of God's qualities. There is a Christian image with a sword in one hand and the balance in the other. It symbolises justice. Truth, Love and other qualities cannot be thought of by us except with the aid of some symbol or form. Images are the symbols which help us to think of the qualities of God. We cannot move onwards without worshipping images.

Q. What kind of prayer is the best?

A. That in which the tongue is in union with the heart. Sincerity is the test. You have desires. Cherishing

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them, you pray, "O Lord, give me Bhakti and Mukti, I have no other desire." That is bad. Pray for what you desire. If you really feel that desires are bad, pray to God to expel them from your mind. Each one has his own drawbacks, defects and wants. So, each one will have his own prayer. Ordinarily, there cannot be a common prayer. The secret of prayer is the ardent desire to get rid of one's defects.

Q. What should be our object in life?

A. Ideals differ. Each one will have his own ideal and object.

Q. What is Atman. Where is it established?

A. Atman is indefinable. It is Itself. It is established in Itself. All that we see are its manifestations.

Q. Who are Mahatmas? Does Swamiji believe in their existence?

A. Yes. Mahatmas are great men. They are so called because of their spiritual illumination. They are also human beings like you, and not beings who have descended from heaven. Rama, Krishna, Sankara and others were Mahatmas.

Q. Is caste distinction necessary?

A. Give it up, if you don't find it necessary? Be guided by your conscience and allow others to be guided by theirs. Don't compel them or press them to accept your view.

Q. Are there Pretas and Pisachas?

A. I do not know. I am not acquainted with them. I have not gone to their realm. Nor have I thought it my duty to make enquiries concerning them.

A. Does Hinduism believe in fate?

A. Hinduism believes in Karma, not in fate or predestination.

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Q. Is Himsa (injury) sinful ?

A. Yes. But unmixed Ahimsa is very difficult to be thought of. We take milk. There are crores of living germs in it. Science has proved it. Can we avoid destroying them ? So in the air we breath. However, we should not wilfully injure any living being. Himsa is of several kinds. They fall under three main heads. 1, Kayika (physical), 2, Manasika (mental), 3, Atmika (spiritual). Of these, the last two are more sinful than the first. That is my view.

Q. Does God want our oblations, offerings and sacrifices. What is their use ?

A. God does not want them. We offer them because of our love to God. Suppose a friend comes to your house. You offer him many things out of your love, not that he desires them. If we love, we offer a part at least of our good things to our beloved. That is human nature.

Q. Does the present system of education affect the Hindu Dharma ?

A. It affects all Dharmas. In America, no educated person goes to a Church. The church-goers are the illiterate classes.

Q. What is the basis for the theory of re-incarnation ?

A. The law of cause and effect. Variety in the world proves it.

(P. K. Vol. IV. p. 92.)

Place :—Haripad Ashrama. Date—Oct. 1918.

Q. What do the Hindu Shastras say regarding the state of the soul after death ? Some say that the Jiva reaps the fruits of its actions (in different worlds) and others say that it goes to the Pitriloka and resides there.

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A. There is no such difference of opinion in the Hindu Shastras. There is no rule that all Jivas should go to the Pitriloka. The virtuous go to the world of the sun, moon or Brahma according to their merits. Those intensely attached to sense objects become Bhutas, Pretas and Pisachas and suffer. Even those who reach the Punyalokas come down after enjoying the fruits of their Punya. "Ksheene Punye Marthyalokam Visanti" (The merit exhausted, they come to the earth), says Krishna in the Gita. And they again engage themselves in works. Thus, they go round the wheel of Karma and suffer birth and death. But when the Jiva comes to realise that the celestial worlds also are transient, then it tries to get out of the wheel and to reach God. Once reaching God, there is no return. "Māmupetya tu Kaunteya Punarjanma na Vidyate" (reaching me, there is no rebirth). This is the view of the Hindu Shastras.

Q. If that is so why do we perform Sraddhas?

Srāddha.

A. Srāddha may be considered in one or two ways. The etymological meaning of the word is 'what is done with 'Sraddha'. Now, it is natural for man to have and to show love and reverence for his deceased ancestors. To think of them and to pray for them once a year, is seen to be a practice in all countries. In the west, they decorate the photos of their deceased mother or father or other near and dear relations and pray for them on the day of their death-anniversary. Practices, may vary in different countries, but the idea is the same. Secondly, it may be questioned if the Srāddha-ceremony confers any benefit on the deceased, since it is only the fruits of one's own Karmas that one reaps. Suppose a debtor who is unable to pay his debts is imprisoned. A rich friend of his may pay it on his behalf and get him released. Similarly, deceased persons suffering for their past actions can be relieved of their sufferings by our making gifts or doing other meritorious deeds on their behalf. Our Seers have found out

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that Punya is as much transferrable as money or other corporeal things. Even for those who are already blessed on account of their Punya, we have to perform Shraddha as an act of duty. I do not mean that you should spend a lot, fearing the threats of Purohits. They live upon your ceremonies and they will frighten you with the curse of your ancestors if you don't spend this and that. Our very loving mothers and fathers will never curse us. If you have not means enough to perform the ceremony, you need only do 'Aranyarodanam', so say the Shastras. Aranyrodanam—cry in wilderness—here means, weeping and praying for the ancestors in any secluded place. The vital thing in Shraddha is devout remembrance of the deceased and sincere prayer for them and spending according to one's means.

Q. What is Swadharma? Is it the Dharma practised by our ancestors?

A. Swadharma is one's own Dharma, not that of one's ancestors which is Paradharma. Dharma is of three kinds. (1) Adhibhautika (that relating to the body), (2) Adhidaivika (that relating to the organs of sense) and (3) Adhyatmika (that relating to the soul). The first two pertains to animals. The third is man's Swadharma. The other two are Paradharma for him. Devotion to them degrades man to the state of a mere animal. His Swadharma leads him onwards and upwards and gives him God-vision. That is what Sri Krishna says in the Bhagavatgita: "Swadharme Nidhanam Sreyah Paradharmo Bhayavahah."

Swadharma.

Q. What is Varnashrama Dharma?

A. Let us first see how it arose. Among ancient Aryans, those who had the inclination to acquire wealth took themselves to agriculture, trade etc. The strong, spirited and valorous ones engaged themselves in fighting their enemies and preserving peace in the society. The discriminating and the dispassionate devoted themselves to

Varnashrama Dharma.

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matters relating to the soul. Persons of the same calling come together and form a group of their own. You have the Bar Association, Teachers' Association, etc. Persons of the first group were called Vaisyas. The second group was called Kshatriya and the third Brahmana. But, then, in those ancient days, there was perfect harmony and close co-operation between all these groups. All worked together for the common weal. The Vaisya supplied the material needs of the community, the Kshatriya undertook its defence and the Brahmana gave it intellectual and spiritual nourishment. That was the old Varnashramadharma. It has decayed and degenerated. Look at the Brahmins, for instance. In old days the Brahmin was to live on Bhiksha, voluntary offering, he could never work for remuneration. To-day, he is in the forefront of money-makers. "Kimatra heyam", (What must one give up in this world?) "Kanakam cha Kanta", (gold and woman!). Well, these are just the most coveted by the present day Brahmin gentleman. To his forefathers, copper was the most sacred metal. In his house, to-day, you are first shown his gold and silver. Pride was unknown to the ancient Brahmin; 'Nirmana-moho Jita Sangadoshah' (devoid of pride and infatuation and the taint of attachment), he was. He cared not for respect at the hands of any. Yet, being full of light, he was, at the very first sight, devoutly worshipped by all. The modern Brahmin has none of the virtues of his predecessors. But he is not at all lacking in pride and self-esteem. The custom of driving away the low castes to a distance, was not in vogue in those days. What does the Gita say.

Vidya vinaya sampanne Brahmane gavi hastini
Suni chaiva Swapake cha Panditah Samadarsinah.

(The Pandits, i.e, those who have known the Atman, are same-sighted with regard to a Brahmana endowed with learning, humility and other good qualities, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a Chandala.)

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Such were the ancient Brahmins. They did not consider birth in a Brahmin family as conferring Brahminhood. The order is this :—

Janmana Jayate Sudrah Karmana Jayate Dwijah
Vedabhyasah bhaved Viprah Brahma janati Brahmanah.

(Man is born a Sudra, rites make him a dwija, by knowledge of the Vedas he becomes a Vipra. A Brahmana is he who knows Brahman). Now-a-days, they do not go through Brahmacharya. By double promotion they get into the Grihasta class. Much in the same way, they get into Brahminhood without having to go through Dwijatwa and Vipratwa. Judged by the ancient standards, most of the modern Brahmins are Dwijabandhus who have no right even to hear the Srutis. You see how Varnashramadharma has degenerated. That is one of the main reasons for our downfall. We must follow dharma. That is the only way to welfare.

Who is a Brahmin.

Q. Swamiji, what is meant by the saying 'Acharah Prathamo Dharmah'.

A. It means, Achara is the first step towards Dharma. Some take the word prathama to mean the most important. It is not correct. The most important portion of the Vedas is called Vedanta and not Prathama Veda. There also Prathama has its ordinary meaning, numerically the first. The different steps of Dharma are (1) Achara (conduct) (2) Vinaya (humility) (3) Vidya (knowledge) (4) Jnana (Realisation). Vinaya alone leads to knowledge. Knowledge of the real and unreal leads to realisation, which alone gives us freedom.

Achara and Dharma.

Q. How is it that Christians ridicule worship of forms?

A. A little thought will convince you that it is senseless, opposed to reason. Their Bible itself says:

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'Man was created in the Image of God'. If God were formless, his creature, man, would also have been formless. So, on the authority of their scripture, we see that their contention is absurd.

Image and God.

Q. How can God be reached?

A. Close your eyes and walk straight on and you will reach Him. That is to say, restrain the outgoing senses, turn the mind inward and concentrate it on God. Then you will get Him. The Kathopanishad says:

Paramehi khani vyatrinat Swayambuh
Tasmat parang passyati namtaratman
Kaschit dheerah pratyagatmanamaikshat
Avritta chakshuramsi tatwamichan.

The self-begotten created the senses outgoing. So, beings direct them outwards, not inwards. But a hero desiring immortality, turned the senses inwards, looked into himself and realised the indwelling Atman. That is how God is reached.

Q. What length of time should we take for worship?

A. There is no hard and fast rule. A moment an hour or a whole life-time may be devoted to worship. It depends on our own strength. Devote as much time as you can with one-pointed attention. Sri Ramakrishna told us a story regarding this. Once Narada felt proud that he was a great Bhakta as he was singing the praises of God incessantly. Krishna knew it, and calling Narada, he said: 'Narada, there is a great devotee of mine, some distance hence. You will do well to see him.' 'Most gladly, Sir' said Narada, and starting off reached the house of the Bhakta. He was an agriculturist and he had a wife and many a children. Getting up early morning and breaking his fast, he would go to his fields and

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work all day long. His mid-day meal would be taken to him by his wife. At sunset he would return, take his bath and meals and immediately go to sleep. But, just before falling asleep, he would once call on the Lord 'Oh Krishna'. For three days and nights Narada observed him. There was no Japa, no Puja; work, work and just one utterance of the Lord's name. Narada felt that Krishna had played a bad trick on him and wanted an explanation. Instead of giving him an explanation, Krishna showed signs of excruciating pain in his stomach. All the royal physicians and nursing queens could give him no relief. Then Bhagavan himself suggested a remedy. 'Take a cupful of oil and let it be carried seven times round the palace without spilling a single drop. And then smear it on my stomach.' But who could do it? Of all, Narada alone had that much concentration. He tried and did it successfully. Krishna recovered, and all felt happy. Then Krishna asked Narada: "you are, indeed, devoted to me most intensely. While going round the palace, how many times did you think of me?" How could I, my Lord?' asked Narada 'I had to concentrate all my attention on the cup' he added. Well! said Krishna with a smile 'you had to carry but one cup. That farmer has to carry hundreds of cups, his household, his cultivation, this, that and so on. Yet, he manages to think of me once a day. Is it not wonderful? Narada felt abashed. 'My pride has vanished' he said.

Worship, Remembrance

Q. Till what stage should we continue worship?

A. Till you become God. Till what stage should a man serve? Till he becomes a master himself. Till what stage does a river flow? Till it reaches the ocean. Similarly we should go on worshipping God till we become one with Him. When you have become God, whom will you worship? Till then, worship is unavoidadle.

Q. What is the origin of Navaratri?

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A. When Sri Rama began feeling himself powerless to kill Ravana, Brahma advised him to worship the Divine Mother. She was in Yoganidra then. It was only during nine days in the Vasanta (spring) season that she kept awake. That was the old Navaratripuja time. Hence it was called Vasantipuja. But Rama's fight with Ravana was in Sarat (autumnal season). Yet, Rama causad Devi to wake up and worshipped Her nine days. That is the present day Navaratri. It is called Saradi-puja. Following the maxim 'Yad Yad Acharati Sreshthah Tat Tadevetharo Jana', we follow Rama, the great Incarnation, and worship the Goddess for nine days. On the 10th day the Goddess blessed Rama and he was able to kill Ravana. That day of victory we celebrate as Vijaya-Dasami. The wicked Ravana was killed and Rama-Rajya was established and all beings felt happy that day. In memory of it, we also make ourselves happy on Vijaya day.

Navaratri.

You should note that the Rama-Ravana fight is not only that far-off solitary event in the external world, but it is also a fight eternally going on within ourselves. Our Abhimana–egoism–is the Ravana in us, always molesting our peace. Relying on the Atman—Rama—we should kill Ravana, the egoism, and establish Ram Rajya which is eternal peace. This is the real meaning of Vijayadasami. Destroy Abhimana and become Atma-Ramas.

(P. K. Vol. XIX p. 31.)

Place :—Alleppey. Date—31st Oct. 1933.

Q.—Are the westerners giving up religion?

A. It is mainly the Russian Bolsheviks that attempt it. That is the idea of the present generation. But, can religion be discarded for ever? The central idea of Bolshevism is, equality and rule by the poletarait—peoples' rule. How long will equality last? Self will gradually creep in and assert itself,

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and then the system will go to pieces. A few clever and selfish people will unite to deprive the poor masses of their vested rights and these will, in time, become their exclusive property. Thus arise class distinctions, the rich and strong upper class, and the poor and weak lower class, with many gradations. That is what goes on everywhere. Nature is never without differentiation and inequality. Equality is in theory only. The very essence of creation is variety. No two things are quite alike. Look at the pots made by a potter, look at the leaves and fruits of a tree and look at the children of the same parents. Every one of them differs from every other of the same class. To bring about equality, you have to destroy them. Break the potter's pot and bring them back to the condition of mere mud. They are all equal there. That is to say, you can have perfect equality not in creation, but in destruction; not in life, but in death. The moment you begin to create, you make differentiation. The moment differentiation ceases, death appears. All the same, there is a unity running through all differentiation. The manifoldness in nature rests upon a unity. The Seers have seen it. They recognise it, but they do not seek to destroy the surface inequalities inherent in life.

Q. What about the Harijan movement, Swamiji.

A. Caste distinction, there is everywhere in the world, though not in the same form as we have it in India. In England, the Lords form one class, and the Commons another. No Lord will give his daughter in marriage to a Commoner. Lord Curzon married a Commoner from America. She is not allowed to partake in social functions along with her husband. In marriages, dinners and other social functions, the classes remain separate without intermingling. See American Society is a conglomeration of the French, the English, the German, the Spanish and all the other nations of Europe and they have no class distinction, they say. But, even there, you actually see well

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marked distinctions ; the professors are a class by themselves, the merchants another, the millionaires form a separate group, and so on. America, the most advanced country in the world, has its own social distinctions. Whether the basis be caste or class, or wealth or culture, distinctions and gradation, there are in society, all the world over ; that is natural. Look at our own country, how new classes or castes are springing up even here ! Some fifteen year ago, I had occasion to visit a temple which was under the control of Narayana Guruswamy. With a Tiyya friend, I went there at the time of Arati. After the ceremony was over, the priest began to distribute prasada. It was given into the hands of some who appeared to be the leaders of Society. For others, it was thrown on the stone-pavement. Pulayas and other lower classes were not admitted into the temple, but were made to stand outside. It was all a true copy of the procedure of Brahmin-ridden temples in Kerala. The priests were behaving as if they belonged to a class superior to the other members of their own community. As years roll on, these priests will claim Brahminhood for themselves. They will invent a tradition that on account of accepting priesthood in Tiyya temples, they were excommunicated by the other Brahmins. Similarly, in Bengal, there is a class known as Suvarnavarnas. They are the priests of the Goldsmiths. And why should they alone lag behind ? They also trace their pedigree to pure, orthodox Brahmins. They fell, because, they condescended to be the priests of Goldsmiths. Among the Harijans, those who get a lift will try to form a class of their own. Eventually, they will repudiate their origin and trace their descent from a higher class. Castes or classes will always exist, their forms may change from time to time, but remain they will. In old days, no caste was considered degraded. No doubt, the lower classes worked for the higher ones. But, this untouchability and unapproachability were

Inequalities natural everywhere.

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unknown. The lower classes served the higher ones as cooks. But, now, caste is primarily in the kitchen. The Harijan movement may do some good. It will sweep away stubborn prejudices and pave the way for the progress of all classes and castes.

Q. The Buddhist monks who visited India recently have stated that the whole world will shortly become Buddhistic. Will it so become ?

A. Every visionary thinks highly of his vision. Did not the Christian Missionaries once proclaim that the world was about to become Christians ! Does it look like it now? What could they accomplish in India? Took some Pariahs, Pulayas and other depressed classes into their fold ! In other countries also, they got hold of the poor aborigines and gave them a Christian social status. What else? And where, indeed, is Christianity now? It has gone out of the country of its birth. The nations which were once proud of their Christianity are now throwing it up. Look at the scholars of Europe and America ! And where is Buddha's religion, the philosophy that he taught? Is his religion practised at all? For the matter of that, what religion is ? Religion or Truth is one thing, and its practice, quite another. Among the Buddhists you will find certain practices, but Buddha's ideal and Buddha's life are nowhere. How, then, can that religion have life and what energy can it have to spread. No one cares for the essentials of religion. All are satisfied with the external symbols and practices. And these they call religion. Look at our own Pandits -- the Brahmins. They think that priesthood and ceremonies constitute the whole of religion. Who cares to study and to understand religion. The ordinary man is satisfied with a bundle of non-essentials, and mistakes them for real religion ; and different religionists fight over their respective practices. But they do not affect the truly religious man.

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Q. Mahatma Gandhi speaks of an "Inner-voice," what may be said of that?

A. That is nothing wonderful. The same inner-voice is called "conscience" by others. To Socrates it appeared as a form. Xerxes of the Old Testament had that innervoice. He went on butchering all Christians. Then he heard a voice "Kill not." He heard it distinctly. He wondered and asked, "who spoke it." "I" rang the reply. That is psychologically true. Deep and earnest thought on anything brings the thing vividly before the mind. It is felt as a sound by some, as vision by others. Some people who are told of terrible ghost like beings such as Pandaramarutha, Madan etc., are so impressed with their reality that they begin to see those forms when, in the dark they chance to go to the places said to be frequented by them and they get owfully frightened. Their own mental waves appear as Marutha and Madan. Gandhiji's is such a mental modification. He being a respected leader, people make much of it. No one pauses to consider whether it agrees or not with sense and reason. It is by using our critical faculty that we judge of the soundness of a view or statement. Why should we not apply the same to Gandhiji's statement?

Q. Mahatma Gandhi has declared that the inner-voice which he heard was Nirakar "Formless." How is it?

A. How can sound be formless? Every object of sense has a form. Some are seen, some are heard, some touched, some smelt and so on. In this way every sense-organ grasps a form. In common parlance "form" means a shape, visible to the eye. That is unscientific. If it was sound that was sensed by Mahatma Gandhi's organ of hearing, it certainly had form. Neither common sence, nor reason, nor scriptural text can establish that it was formless. But he might have thought of it as formless. Such conception is termed "Bhranti" (delusion) by our ancient teachers. A rope is mistaken

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for a snake. What is seen is really only a rope, but the delusion is so strong that we get terribly afraid and take to our heels. When, with the aid of light, we see that it is a rope, the delusion vanishes. Our perception of anything depends upon our mental condition. Mind is our instrument of knowledge. Mind constitutes our knowledge. That is how Swami Vivekananda expressed it. Try to understand it thoroughly well. But for mental reaction, no knowledge is possible. It is the mental modification that we know and take as our knowledge. When a very strong modification gets reflected in the mind itself, it is supposed by some to be something divine. The origin of the thing being unknown, it is attributed to a divine agency. It is the mind itself, with its stored up past impressions, that brings it about. In this light of this fact let us now look a little closely at Mahatma Gandhi's "innervoice." Gandhiji was born a Jain. His ancestors were also Jains. Jainism has two schools. One of them believes that God is formless. Gandhiji and his ancestors belonged to that school. They look upon the twenty-four Tirthamkaras as human teachers. The other school believes that they are all Avataras. Gandhiji does not believe so. The belief that God is formless is in his very blood and bones and marrow. It is hereditary, his ancestors had that belief, from infancy he was brought up in that belief. His whole being is, so to say, surcharged with that belief. No wonder, then, that the voice which he heard and which he felt to be of divine origin is believed by him to partake of that divine characteristic —formlessness. All our present ideas are coloured by all our past impressions. It cannot be otherwise. If Gandhiji were a devotee of Venugopala—Krishna—the voice might have appeared to him to have proceeded from Krishna's flute. As is the mind, so are its perceptions. What is sensed by the organs is, or has always a form.

The formless is beyond the senses. It transcends both speech and mind. So says the Sruti. That is

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our experience, and that stands to reason. You can pronounce the word Nirakara. It has so many syllables. But what does it really connote, we cannot know. Our organs are limited, our mind is limited. With limited means how can we grasp the unlimited. What is known is not expressed; what is expressed is not known. That is the truth.

Place:—Haripad. Date—Nov. 1923.

Q. What is the present condition of Vraja?

A. It remains as it was, 168 sq. miles in extent. The people of Vraja have not got the present day education. They have no love for it. Their God is baby Krishna. They have not built any temple for him. But there are temples built by rich pilgrims. The Vraja people know very well where Krishna played his sports. And they are immensely glad to show them to the pilgrims. Their worship is unique. They do not think of Krishna as God or as the bestower of happiness or anything like that. To them, Krishna is just a child whom they love with all their heart and soul. They do not worship him as we do, nor do they pray to him for anything. To do so would be inauspicious, they think. 'May baby Krishna be happy, may he be free from all troubles, may no pain or discomfort affect him.' They will take up misery on themselves, but let Krishna be perfectly happy; may he be blessed. That is their prayer. And they bless him. When they prepare sweetmeats or anything nice, they first reserve a portion of it for baby Krishna. He is their child, their love, their all in all. There is not a trace of selfishness in their devotion to Krishna. Hear what the Gopis say in the Gopikagita.

Vatsalya Bakti

Chalasi yadvrajat charayan pasun
Nalinasundaram natha te padam
Silatrinamkuraih seedateeti nah
Kalilatam manah kanta gachhati.

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O! Beloved!, it grieves us to think how thy feet, tender, soft and lovely as the lotus, get pricked by thorns and rubbles as thou goest forth driving cattle from Vraja. And again,

Yat te sujāta charanāmburuham staneshu
Bheetah sanaih priya dadheemahi Karkaseshu
Tenatavimatasi tad Vyadhate na Kimswit
Koorpadibhir bhramati dheer bhavadayasham nah.

"Sweet one! with thy beautiful lotus-feet which we place on our hard breasts gently and in trepidation, lest their hardness should cause thee discomfort thou walkest in the forest treading on sharp-edged stones. O! what great pain it must be giving thee! We are anguished at the very thought of it. What is life to us but thy well-being and happiness." It is the song of love, free from all taint of carnality. Ordinary Bhakti is shop-keeping. We want this thing, in return we shall make that offering. With us, even paternal love has selfishness as an appendix. But the love of the Gopis for Krishna was perfectly pure and unselfish. It was divine. The people of Vraja are mostly poor; wealthy pilgrims give them something.

Q. How has the present generation also got that old love?

A. It is hereditary. The present-day Brahmins are not only devoid of any of the Brahmanical qualities of their fore-fathers, but they have accepted service and imbined the qualities of the lower Varnas. Yet, how they lord over and bless, and curse the other Varnas! It is nothing but heredity.

Q. May we not also take up that highest aspect of love of the Vraja people?

A. Oh! No. It is so hard to get it. Simply to profess it, is very bad. It is as a result of great punya that one gets Vatsalya Bhakti. Are we anywhere near it? That is Paradharma for you, not Swadharma. You

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cannot think of Krishna in that light. Other religions also have that method of approach. In Christianity, for instance, ordinarily Christians think of Christ as an august personality, as crucified and as a man of sorrows. In Rome, however, it is the baby Christ with the Madonna that is worshipped. Bambino is the name they have given to Christ. Bambino means a baby. Bambino has many churches built for him. Devotees going there do not kneel or pray. They offer cakes and other sweet things to the Bambino, pray for his happiness, and they bless him.

Q. Is it not sinful to kill animals for food? What is Swamiji's opinion on Ahimsa.

A. Ahimsa is a relative term. Its conception differs with different individuals; with some, physical pain is himsa, with others, himsa is mental. If the inflicting of physical pain alone is himsa, you may kill a man under the action of Chloroform; he will not feel any pain. Some persons think nothing for physical pain. But they will keenly feel a harsh or unkind word. So, what a man considers as himsa depends on his mentality. There is himsa in every action; why in killing animals only? In drinking water, in breathing air and in the very act of coming into being, there is himsa. Plants have life like birds and beasts. Is it not himsa to cut and eat them. Do we not kill countless bacteria when we drink water and when we breathe the air. A child is born; what is it? Numerous cells constitute the seed entering the mother's womb. One of them, the strongest, destroys the other cells and survives according to the law of the Survival of the Fittest and comes out as a babe. So, our very birth is the resultant of so much himsa. Then, after being born, at every stage of life we live by himsa. Sucking the mother's breast is himsa, because the milk imbibed has thousands of bacteria in it. Doctors forbid giving children milk deficient in healthy bacteria. They examine the mother's milk and if they find it deficient,

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they advise engaging proper wet nurses. Thus we are born in himsa, and we live in himsa. We simply waste our time and energy in profound thought and endless discussion on such a subject. Enslaving society and a great nation is a himsa greather than any you can think of.

(P. K. Vol. XX. p. 32.)

Place :—Haripad. Date—Sept. 1912.

Q. Swamiji is establishing a Mutt. Mutts are Ashramas for Sanyasins. They degenerated in the Buddhistic age. What steps are proposed to be taken by Swamiji to prevent such a fate overtaking Swamiji's Mutts.

Q. Let us analyse my friend's question. Do Mutts degenerate or is it the inmates of the Mutt that degenerate. Mutts are buildings. My friend could not have meant the degeneration of the building. So, he had the inmates in mind. His question. therefore, is, how I propose to keep the inmates of the Mutts from falling ? Well, just consider where those inmates come from. They don't descend from the sky, nor do they sprout up from the earth. They are begotten by you, householders. If you are Vyasas, they will be Sukas. But, far from being Vyasas, the present day grihastas are slaves of Kamakanchana. How can you expect Suka-like sons to spring from their loins ? And, what is more, you reserve your intelligent, good natured and clever sons for Government Service. Even if they are so inclined, you will never permit them to become Sanyasins. The good-for-nothings you may consent to go to some Mutt. And, then, what do you expect of them ? Perfection ! Is it reasonable ? You give a Chakram and in return you want a lakh of rupees worth of things. Is it not ? So, it lies with you to see that the inmates of Mutts do not fall below your ideal. You should be like Vyasa. You should become ideal house-holders and give well-qualified sons to the Ashramas.

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Q. How may degradation of Society be prevented?

A. There is no all-round prevention. If each individual is virtuous, the Society is good.

Q. What is the object of creation?

A. It is the western system of education that has introduced the word creation. It has no equivalent in Sanskrit. The English word creation means producing something out of nothing, as the dictionary gives. Natural science has proved that idea to be wrong. It originated from Christianity. God created Adam. The question arises, out of what? But, our Shastras call it Srishti—projection, throwing out what was inside—manifesting what was latent. Our Shastras say that Srishti is beginningless. How can we speak of the purpose of the beginningless thing. A light is burning. If you ask what purpose the light has in view, the only possible answer is that it is its nature to become manifest.

(P. K. Vol. XX. p. 392.)

Place:—Ottapalam. Date—23rd Aug. 1935.

The Puranas usually describe the time of advent of Divine personages into this world as exceptionally delightful and peaceful. Krishna's birth time was different. So also were the place and circumstances of his birth. In the first place, he was born in a prison. Secondly, it was midnight time. Thirdly nature was in commotion. There was thunder and lightning, wind and rain, and rivers were flooded. Why was it so? It was symbolical of the times, a reflection of the troubled condition of that age. It was the concrete expression of the struggle and restlessness of internal forces. The commotion was many-sided. All phases of life were affected. Spirituality had declined. In the world of thought and philosophy, various schools were warring with one another. "Vedavadaratah

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Partha ! nanyadasteeti vadinah ". (They say propitiate the Devas by sacrifice as enjoined by the Vedas. There is nothing else to do.)

' Samkhyayogau Prithak balah prawadan.' ti(Children's talk it is that samkhya and yoga are distinct and separate.)

' Tyajyam doshavad ityeke Karmaprahuh.' (Give up works as harmful, say some.)

' Kimanyat Kama hetukam.' (What else but lust (desire) is the cause of beings), and so on you find in the Gita. Then, there was political turmoil also. Mighty Kings and warriors, Daityas in human forms, were tyrranising over people and forming alliances to overthrow the virtuous ones. Society, too, had its own complex problems to solve. Tamas in various forms was on the war-path. Satwa and Rajas were on the defensive, and not very strong either. At such a time came Krishna to set matters right. To dispel darkness, to restore peace and harmony, to establish Dharma, was the object of Krishna's Avatara. In his own words, " Parithranaya Sadhunam Vinasaya cha dushkritam, Dharma Samsthapanarthaya" he manifested himself. Right from infancy to the very day of his ascension, he was ever busy with his work.

Rama's objects were not so varied. His field of operation was not so extensive. Expression of perfect manhood was his main work—to show the might and glory of man who alone could crush Ravana—the terror of the world, unconquerable by Devas, Asuras or other created beings. He set before the world the ideal for man in all his relations, as a son, a brother, a husband, a friend, a master and a king.

In both these ages we find men who never swerved from the path of Dharma, who held fast to the lotus feet of the Lord in weal and in woe. They did not care for sense pleasures. Is it for sense gratification

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that we should worship God? Are Kama and Kanchana the goal of the devotee? If I offer this to Guruvayurappan I shall get that benefit! Can a devotee calculate like that and act accordingly. Never! He does not count loss or gain. Calculation is not in his nature. He loves God, come pleasure, come pain. What are they to him? He has the bliss of love in his heart; he can seek nothing else. You have heard of Sri Ramakrishna's story ot the born-agriculturist. The crops may fail him, but he will not give up his profession. He knows and thinks of nothing else. Such is a born devotee. Such were the Pandavas. What troubles and hardships they underwent, and how long! Yet, never once did they waver or lose their devotion? But, here, our calculating friends might ask: "Did they not, after all, get back the Empire?" True, they got the Empire and ruled over it for a short time. For they desired to serve their mother. But the mother said, "Children, you have regained your patrimony. Now live happily. I want none of these pleasures. I am going to the forest to do penance." She went her way. Krishna also left the world. Then the Pandavas thought "We fought and won mainly for our mother's sake. She has left us. Our beloved Lord also has departed. Why do we now want all this?" So, spurning an Empire, its pleasures and its glory, they set out on Mahaprasthana. They did not feel that they were doing something extraordinary and glorious. To the onlookers it may appear as wonderful renunciation, their great march full of hardship may look something heroic. But, to them it was nothing uncommon or difficult. The great "Orb, the painter divine" rises in the east. The lover of light marches on towards it. People whom he leaves behind cry, "Oh; he is renouncing the west." Does he feel like that? Is he consciously renouncing the west. Is it with any mental effort that he leaves the west behind him and takes to the 'East'. What are west and east to him? There is the brilliant light. He wants it, he goes towards it.

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He has no other goal, no other thought. He does not swerve to the right or to the left, but marches straight on to the object of his love. That is Bhakti. That nature is not easy to acquire. Our present nature is to calculate well. We shall go on doing it. By degrees, in course of time, we shall learn by bitter experience that calculation will not pay, will not save us. Then, we shall give up that habit and cling to God, irrespective of what befalls us. Pleasures will have lost its power of attraction, and pain will have lost its terror for us. God alone will have become our goal and we shall have become natural devotees. Bharata could have legitimately and honestly ruled the land and enjoyed all royal pleasures. Rama had even asked him to do so. But, no, not enjoyment! but, service, that was Bharata's ideal. If I am not so fortunate as to serve Rama in person as Lakshmana does, I shall install his sandals on the throne and be their humble servant! So thought Bharata, and for fourteen long years he lived a stern ascetic life in the midst of royal luxuries. That is natural Bhakti. Blessed are they who succeed in getting it.

(To a disciple) I am saying all this in answer to your letter. Do you understand? You complain that you alone have no progress while all the others are coming up. This is a never ending complaint. If you feel that your devotion to God does not bring you any good, why don't you give it up, right away. There can be no hypocricy in religion, no calculation in it. If you really think that it is profitless, better take up some lucrative work.

There was a King who was very charitable. He established an asylum for the diseased and disabled. Large numbers flocked to it; for it was a happy life that they led in comfortable quarters. The inmates grew so luzy and pretended to be so weak and disabled that they would not get up even to answer the calls of nature. The king heard of this. He ordered the

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building to be set fire to. The inmates felt the heat. They turned this side and that side, but refused to get up. The fire spread. They began to cry for help. Yet, they kept themselves on their beds. At last, seeing no help arriving, most of them got up, though very reluctantly, and rushed out for their very lives. Only two really disabled persons remained. They could not really move out. So the king had them removed in safety. All the others were humbugs. Much in the same way, the true devotee sticks to his Ishtam even when his life is in danger. The others rush out of the asylum of religion when things take a bad turn and roam at will in Samsara.

A philanthropic millionaire used to give charity to all who asked for it. Many cheats came to him and received gifts. His friends pointed out that his sympathy and charity were being much abused. To satisfy them, he stopped making gifts. Then people began to point out to him as a hard-hearted man. To avoid the reproach, he began to practise charity with discrimination. Then the complaint was, "how calculating the man is. A millionaire, and he calculates so much and "gives three pies and six pies!" Finally, he thought, 'I shall pay no heed to what others say. It is my nature to give and I will give liberally.' Following his own nature he became a great Karmayogin. He learnt by experience that Swadharma is life, Paradharma is death. Experience alone makes us steadfast, gives us steadiness of character. By experience you will learn that unselfishness alone gives true happiness. The selfish man is always miserable. You also will learn by experience.

Pessimism, optimism, practicalism, all these are more or less the product of circumstances. When a man is imagining himself perfectly happy, when even his dreams are of sweetest memory, when his cup of pleasures is full to the brim, comes a sudden, dashing blow. His nearest and dearest is snatched away from

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him in the twinkling of an eye. The whole scene changes. Tears take the smiles and darkness that of light. Optimism gives way to pessimism. But one such hard blow does not awaken man. Nature gives him a small dose of pleasure. He drinks it, eagerly forgets the dark past and begins to be optimistic again, though with less ardour. Once more nature's cruel hands are upon him, a soothing balm follows. This trick is repeated times without number. Gradually man opens his eye to the reality. He sees that it was a child's play that he was engaged in all the time, that life is not meant for play and that he must strive to reach his goal. He begins his march towards it, the glorious light that which has now begun to attract him. All his old associations are left behind. He does not think of them, casts no parting glance at them. But the people who do not see the light cry and weep. 'Oh! he is renouncing!' They pull him back and try to drag him down to the darkness. But he has his gaze fixed and he marches steadily onwards.

There are only two things enjoyable in life, so a poet has said:

Samsara Visha Vrikshasya
Dwe phale amritopame
Kavyamritarasaswadah
Sallapah Sajjanaih saha.

On the poisonous tree of samsara, there are two fruits which are like ambrosia. One is literature, yielding the taste of nectar and the other, the words of the wise with whom we converse. Here, literature (Kavya) does not mean secular literature. It is also called Kavya. Kavya is Kavi's work, and Kavi really means a knower of Brahman. "Kavirmaneeshi etc," you find in the Upanishads. Such a one's work is amrita, nectar, leading to immortality. Talk to the wise, their words will enlighten us, The tree is poisonous, but two of its fruits are ambrosial. The stalk of

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the lotus and the branches of the rose plants are thorny. Yet they produce beautiful flowers.

Who can point out and help us to reach the goal? One who has himself reached it, none else. The Muktapurusha alone can show us the way to freedom. Social or political freedom is not the goal. That is evanescent. How many countries we have seen raising and falling, gaining independence one day and losing it the next day. In fact, there is no real independence in the world of matter. How can there be, when all things are interdependent—linked together in an endless, complex chain. Matter can never be free. By its very nature, it is limited and fettered. Real freedom is in the spirit only. There alone we can have unchangeable and eternal peace and bliss. That is our goal, and that is God.

(P. K. Vol. XX p. 395.)

Place :—Ottapalam. Date 24th Aug. 1935.

Q. What is Tapasya?

A. People, in general, consider mortification of the flesh as Tapasya. In Bengal, I have seen many kinds of such hard tapasya. Some people stand holding up one hand for a number of days. Others stand upon one leg for days together. Blood accumulates in those parts; swelling and other disorders appear and they suffer greatly. This sort of penance is performed with some material end in view. It is tamasic tapas. Vows are mostly undertaken to secure some worldly benefit. 'This vow I shall keep for 12 days to get myself cured of my disease. I shall carry a Kavadi to Palni if I gain that object!' Such are some of the motives and forms of tapasya in vogue.

But real tapasya is controlling the body, senses and mind; and directing the self-controlled mind towards God.

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Q. In which aspect should one think of God? If two aspects are alike pleasing and agreeable to the mind, how is one of them to be preferred?

A. Infinite are the aspects of God? You may choose any aspect you like. A man may touch my hand or my feet or my head. Whichever part of the body he touches, he touches me. The ganges has her source in the Himalayas and falls into the ocean. Take a dip anywhere along the course, at the source or lower down at Prayag or Kasi or anywhere else, you bathe in the Ganges. It is not a particular place or time that gives sanctity to the Ganges. Here is the Bharata River flowing in front of the Ashrama. To take a river-bath, you go to the ghat near the Ashrama. You may go two miles up or down also. But this being more convenient, you go there. It will be meaningless to ask you to go near the Railway Station or anywhere else. In Bengal, they sell dolls made of sugar. One boy eats its head, thinking that it must be the sweetest part. Another bites its foot which is as sweet as the head. It is all sugar and nothing but sugar. So is God. He is all Bliss. To taste the doll you have to begin with any one particular part of it, the head or hand or leg. The result is the same. Similarly you have to take up any one aspect of God. Choose what appeals to you most.

Q. If all this is God, what is there to be renounced?

A. You do not seem to understand what renunciation really means. It is not a deliberate giving up, as people think. It is a corollary to taking up something else. In the act of your taking up or accepting a thing, a less valuable thing is naturally passed over. There are currency notes of various denominations, say a ten-rupees note, a hundred-rupees note and a thousand-rupees note and you are allowed to take any one of them. Knowing their value, you take the thousand-rupees notes and you renounce the other two.

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A Sanyasin does, just in the same way, select what he knows to be more valuable. In place of the old feeling that he has a house, a mother, a father etc., he begins to feel that the whole world is his home, that all men are fathers and all women mothers to him. The small drops off, as the bigger comes in. Your question is, "if all this is God, what is there to be renounced?" If you do really see and feel all this as God, you have nothing to renounce But with most of us it is only in theory, in practice, nothing of this is God to us. By means of observation and experiment you should arrive at the truth, see it actually before you. Then you will feel no differentiation, no high or low, no giving up or accepting. Until then, to say that all this is God, is mere vain talk.

Q. What is Dharma ?

A. It covers an extensive ground. Its meaning is very wide. To a dacoit, 'kill and plunder' may be Dharma. There is a band of robbers, every member of which is bound to secrecy. One of them feels the pricks of conscience and divulges the truth. To get rid of him forthwith may be the Dharma of the band. It differs with different individuals and it also changes with time, place and circumstances. No general definition, cut and dry, can be given. If it is spirituality or religion that you mean by the word Dharma, that is entirely different.

Q. But then, has not a house-holder certain duties ?

A. Please explain what you mean by duty.

Q. A householder has his father, mother and other relations. If any of them falls sick or is otherwise in trouble, is not the householder bound to care for them and help them ?

A. This 'duty' is an artificial creation. A man and a woman somehow become attached to each other. They desire to live jointly and build a house for themselves. Living together, they beget some children.

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There was no obligation, no compulsion, no idea of duty in any of these. It was all accidental. As the children grow up, they are taught that they should do this and this, that such and such are duties for them. Brought up in that environment, they begin to feel certain things as their duty and seek to discharge them. That feeling is secondary, a byproduct of joint living. Human relationship may be likened to that of logs of wood or of leaves and rubbish floating in a rushing river. It is not dissimilar to that of the units in a wandering herd of cattle or flock of sheep. If a man were to ask you whether all his miseries were not caused by his father and mother bringing him into the world, what answer can you give him.

Q. Is it no duty of ours then, to help the poor and relieve the suffering?

A. That stands on a different footing. That 'duty' does not spring from any special relationship as that of a son to his father or mother etc. Kind-hearted people may feel it their duty to give charity to the deserving. But there are others who deem it their duty to injure others for securing their selfish ends. Each man thinks differently according to his nature. But there is one primary duty common to all men. With the dawn of the thinking faculty, man should seek to know who he is, to realise his own self. That is his first and foremost duty. If that is discharged, he will be able to know all other duties. 'He knows all who knows self.' To know whether the rice in the boiling pot has been boiled, you take just one grain and examine it and you know the state of all the grains.

Place :—Ottapalam. Date—26th Aug. 1935.

The goal of Life.

Men are of three kinds; the pessimists who see nothing but evil in the world; the optimists who always hope for the best; and the practicalists, matter of fact people, who see the world as a mixture of good and evil and try to wrest as much possible good as they can out of the present.

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The pessimist ever remains discontented. The optimist thinks that he will be happy with, say, hundred rupees. He works hard, never minding the difficulties in his way. Sometimes he tastes a very bitter fruit but hope is buoyant in him, and he goes on working. Even if one's path is all strewn with roses and he has a very easy and most happy time, yet, there comes a moment when he is faced with utter darkness, swallowing everything which he had loved and clung to, sweeping away the very ground from under his feet, throwing him headlong into a frightening chasm. He recoils, staggers, reels and finally falls into the bottomless abyss. Life which was flowing with milk and honey empties itself into an ocean of gall and wormwood.

The practical matter of fact man may be very clever and wise in practical matters. But to him also comes the invisible robber who robs him of everything, of even life which was dearest to him.

(P. K. Vol. VII. p. 265)

Place :—Trivandrum. Date—April 1922.

A Brahmacharin of the Trivandrum Ashrama asked Swamiji :

Nishkama Karma.

"We are doing certain works here in connection with the Ashrama, and we desire that our works should bear fruit. Are they not Sakama-karmas producing bondage ?

Swamiji :—Sakama they are, in as much as you desire them to become fruitful. But, then, if you do them as worship of Ramakrishna, through service to humanity, they will not bind. The fruits you desire to reap are not for yourself and so the actions are Nishkama, in relation to you.

Q. Are renunciation and service the ideals of this Yuga ?

A. Why of this age alone ? In all Yugas, they have been the ideals. The Christians say that these have

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Renunciation and Service Ideals of all Yugas.

come down from their religion. That is not so. Christianity got them from Buddhism; Buddha got them from the Upanishads. But their expression and application differ in accordance with time, place and circumstances. In the Puranic age, they took the form of Yajna, Ishta-poortha, etc. Now they have assumed the form of service. Shiva and Tyaga are the same. Shiva has put on holy Vibhuti (ashes). That means that desires and egoism have been burnt to ashes. It is that which you put on your forehead. Shiva wears no ornaments. He lives in cremation grounds. That shows Tyaga -- utter renunciation. Shiva is never separate from Tyaga. We must be Shiva's children.

Q. Are the teachings of the Gita to be followed by all?

A. The Gita contains teachings for the householder, the Sanyasin and others in other Ashramas and conditions. Each one should follow the teaching suited to his station in life.

Q. Should Sanyasins perform work?

A. They may or may not, as they please. But if they work, it should be as Nishkama. Karmayoga is not Karma-kanda.

Q. How does Asrayadosha affect the recepient?

A. The Shastras say that acceptance of gifts from bad people does harm to the acceptor. The receiver of stolen property is punished. Similarly a sharer in ill-gotten wealth will have to share its evil effects. Food touched by a person having a contagious disease transmits the germs of the disease to the person eating that food. Much in the same way, the taint of sin attaches itself to the things owned by the sinner. The germs of his sin are conveyed through his gift. His sinful thoughts also are transmitted through the things he gives away.

Asraya Dosha.

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Q. Sri Ramakrishna was a great spiritual power. Yet it is said, he could not accept food touched by some and gifts offered by some. How can it be explained?

A. I can't say how it can be explained. To be able to explain it, we have to attain a position higher than his. He himself could not account for it. He did not label men as good or bad. He simply could not accept food touched or offered by people whom we call bad. Something within forbade him from accepting it; that is all he knew, not the why of it. Once, when Swami Saradananda was coming to Dakshineswar with sweet-meats sent by his mother as an offering, a relative of his also sent some cakes. Sri Ramakrishna ate the sweets sent by the Swami's mother. He could not touch the other offering. He did not allow even his house-holder devotees to eat it. All such offerings, he used to give to Swami Vivekananda. The other disciples suspected, it was the Master's partiality towards Norendra and they decided to eat some. Once, Swami Brahmananda tasted a bit, and suffered for it. He lost all peace of mind. Sri Guru Maharaj laughed and said "well served—you didn't heed my words." Swami Vivekananda brought all sorts of low and wicked people to Dakshineswar, but Rakhal Maharaj brought only good pious people. For Sadhakas, Rakhal is the example, not Norendra. A Sadhaka should observe these rules. Otherwise he will have to suffer much. After attaing Jnana and Siddhi, one may set them aside. But a Sadhaka's life should be subject to strict discipline. Sankaracharya also has said: "Oushadhavat prasniyat", one should take food as a medicine, not to fatten oneself. Swami Vivekananda was born a Siddha. He had not to practice Sadhana to attain any Siddhi. If Sadhakas disregard the rules and regulations, they are liable to fall.

Q. Should a Sadhaka worship forms?

A. Yes. Who can meditate on Nirguna, the formless? Some people decry worship of forms. At the same time they worship or meditate on the sun, the moon,

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a light or other objects in nature. They consider themselves very clever and greater than worshippers of Rama and Krishna whose forms are Intelligence embodied. You need not bother yourself about all that. Let them meditate on Nirguna, sun or moon. Meditation on Nirguna comes as a result of Sadhana for hundreds of years. Even then it is not wholly Nirguna. In pure Nirguna, the Sadhaka gets merged and dissolved.

Q. Is meditation not possible without repetition of Mantra?

A. Can you meditate without an idea? Can there be an idea without a word to represent it? So, the word has to be present along with meditation. Patanjali says: "Tajjapah Tadarthabhavanam". Repetition of that (Mantra) and meditation on its meaning.

Q. Will not the word slip away when the meaning is meditated upon.

A. No. Japa is necessary, whatever be the path you follow, Jnana, Karma, Bhakti or Yoga. Constant Japa is good, even while engaged in other work. Continuous Japa brings up the meaning in the mind, at times, at least. That is why Japa is taught to be practised from boyhood. In course of time that Samskara becomes strong and the man will not turn out an atheist. This method was discovered by our Rishis of old. It is a great help. Worship, Japa, etc., should be practised at least thrice a day—during the three Sandhyas, in the morning, at midday and at sunset. That has a meaning. We derive our being from God, we live in God, and in the end we return to God. So at sun-rise, midday and sunset we join our mind to God.

Thrisandhya.

(P. K. Vol. VIII. p. 314.)

Place:—Mahe. Date—Aug. 1923.

Every Incarnation fulfils the previous ones, never destroys them. Attach no value to the words of a religious teacher who says that the old Acharyas were wrong.

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Avataras in each Yuga supplies the needs of the time. By following them alone can the people of that Yuga easily cross the ocean of Samsara. Akbar's coins are not current now. But the metal of the coins has an intrinsic value convertible into current coin. Sri Ramakrishna came to supply the wants of the present age. He came not for one country or continent, but for the whole world. The messages of the previous Incarnations except Buddha were spread in India only. And Buddha reached the outside world two centuries after him. But within eight years of Sri Ramakrishna's Samadhi, he had numerous followers in the west. It was there that the message was first proclaimed by the Swami Vivekananda. Ramakrishna worshipped his own picture. Once he told us of a vision he had, in which he saw people who bored the upper part of the ear, (these were Tamilians as we knew in later years) and Europeans came and worshipped him and spoke to him in languages which he did not know then. 'Where are they, why don't they come?' We asked him. "Wait, you will see them" he said. Every word of his has now come true. Ramakrishna came to establish a spiritual empire, not a mundane one. Those who have eyes will see. To know him, one has to pray as Arjuna prayed to Sri Krishna. It is, indeed very difficult. We ourselves knew very little about him at that time. He realised the Infinite and then taught the world, himself remaining on the threshold of the Infinite. See how soon his name has been taken even by women in out of the way villages. He was the fulfilment of all the previous Avataras. Those who knew him, therefore, knew all those Avataras. He is the Yugavatara. Pray to him to reveal to you the secrets of all Shastras. Make hay while the sun shines.

The Yugavatara.

In Bengal, a visitor, however low, is at once offered a seat. He is considered an atithi (a guest). It is a householder's duty to honour and serve a guest. But here, very few are asked to take their seat. You bow down to wealth or power. Before a rich man or an official

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you keep standing with folded hands and covering your mouth. The son keeps on standing before his father.

Achara.

What custom is this? It is not Aryan. It is the English man's custom. In England, a poor man has to stand before the rich. It is a slave-habit. Give up those Anaryan customs and live like true Aryans.

Q. Swamiji, is rebirth a fact?

Re-birth.

A. Why should you know that? Think of this life. Thought about re-birth is something like a trader's calculation of loss and gain. If I do wicked deeds now, shall I get punished hereafter? What good shall I reap if I do such and such a meritorious deed? These are the questions troubling the questioners. If they are convinced that there is no reward or punishment hereafter, they won't hesitate to commit any sin and they will never do any good. They can never have unselfish love. They cannot even love God without an eye to their own profit. Those who do wickedness out of love for it are better than such people. It is, mostly, the doubting type that pauses to calculate the loss and gain of present action. "Samsayatma Vinasyati", (the doubtor comes to ruin.)

Look at Ravana. Without thought of reward, nay, knowing full well that opposition to Rama would be fatal, he fought Rama. Look at his heroism. He lies fallen on the battle-field, struck with Rama's arrow. Life is not extinct. None but Rama can remove that arrow. So Rama - God incarnate - stands upon Ravana's chest and pulls it away. Ravana, with his eyes fixed on the form of Rama, and a smile on his lips, gives up his body. That is heroism. That is what heroes achieve. God-vision is not for those traders who go on calculating what they woold get if they do such and such a thing, whether they would get this boon or that. You must be bold and forward in everything. When you love God,

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love him for love's sake, without a single thought of recompense, not desiring even Vaikuntha. Your sole desire should be that you should be able to think of God incessantly. What does it matter if you are born again or not. It is they alone who are devoid of Bhakti that enquire whether there will be a rebirth or not. The Bhaktas on the other hand, desire to be satisfied in and with their own Atman. Seekers after knowledge of rebirth are like the trader in Ramakrishna's story, and a true Bhakta is like the farmer. A born cultivator never exchanges his profession for another, whether the cultivation fails or not. A trader taking to cultivation gives it up, if the crops fail him but once. Those who have real faith in the Atman should strive to realise It instead of being in that sleepy, half-hearted condition of the trader. It is really the faithless ones that probe these questions of rebirth and Karma.

God is my Mother. I am the Mother's child. "I am weak, I am not a Siddha." These thoughts do not befit a child of the Mother. Crying and weeping do not befit us. Struggle and fight, that is the way. I may have many shortcomings. Yet, am I not God's child? I have every right to use force with him. He is my Mother. If I use force with her, she may give me two slaps. But she is my mother and I love her. God is with you, nearest to you. There is none else so near to you. "Tadantarasya Sarvasya." (It is inside of everything.)

One should have faith. The conception of God as sitting in judgment in heaven, with sword in hand, is not for us. Heaven or hell, where can God go? It is within us. Ramakrishna has said that we are in hell when we have evil thoughts and that we are in heaven when we have noble thoughts. I may be in a temple, but if my thoughts are on a dancing girl, of what avail is the temple. So, heaven, hell, rebirth and all are the results of one's thoughts. If we think of God always, we are in eternal Heaven. Sincerity and unselfish

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love are the prime requisites for a spiritual life. If these are present, other defects in character will slowly disappear.

(P. K. Vol. XII.)

Place :—Haripad Ashrama. Date—Mar. 1927.

Q. Is anything possible for man, without God's help ?

A. You should first of all know what man is. He is a mixture of animal and God. Man enjoys sense-pleasures. Animal also does it. But, man is not as wholly engrossed in them as animals. Man cannot eat with the same gusto as an animal. While taking his food, he may be thinking of some litigation. If man's only object was sense-enjoyment, he would have taken up an animal body. No man is ever content with sense gratification alone. He desires and tries to get some higher enjoyment. The uncivilised aborigines living in forests are little removed from the animal kingdom. Yet, they build dwelling places and cook their food. A poet derives greater pleasure from the poems of Wordsworth and others than from food. An intelligent man, a wise man, strives to get an enjoyment higher than what the senses can give. That which urges man to seek that higher enjoyment is his inherent divinity. Whatever drags down man for the gratification of the sense is bestiality. A slave to that urge is almost a brute. Animals have nothing higher to strive for, nor can they do so. Hence animals have no mukti and hence it is that wise men discard sense pleasures and seek something higher. Divinity is effulgent and all-wise and is always successful. The more we submit to our inherent divinity, the more we are successful. But success makes man forget the divinity that was the real cause of the success, and he feels proud that his own powers brought him success. When failure is the result, he casts all the blame on God and conceals the fact that his bestiality was the real cause. Ignorance is the cause of Egoism. Therefore,

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one should try to awaken the latent Divinity and root out the animality. This is the way to progress.

Q. How is it that God is praised for good results but is not blamed for bad ones?

A. Either say that God causes both good and evil, or say that you yourself are responsible for both. If you believe that God brings about both, you will go beyond the pair of opposites, beyond both pleasure and pain. "Sukha-dukhe same kritwa" says the Gita. You will be like that. A knower of Brahman has no fear. "Anandam Brahmano Vidwan na bibhethi kutaschana." (The wise one enjoying the bliss of Brahman is never afraid of anything.) In success, our ego raised its head; in failure it droops, we are dispirited, melancholy. God is like a great reservoir of water. Thence flows all power. There are many pipes connected with the reservoir. The pipes imagine that they are giving out water and forget that they are unable to give even a drop the moment their connection with the reservoir is severed. Our power, success and goodness are all derived from God.

(P. K. Vol. XII.)

Place:—Ottapalam. Date—Mar. 1927.

Q. What is limited by space must be limited by time, says Swami Vivekananda. How is this?

A. Limited is limited all round. Time, space and causation are interdependent. So what is limited by one of them must be limited by the others also. Space cannot be conceived of without time, nor time without space, and causation cannot be thought of without both the above.

Q. If that is so, may not religions which believe in the space—limitation of the soul—be said to believe that it is not eternal. What is the position, then, of the Visishtadwaiti who holds that the Atman is Anu (Atomic).

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A. Visishtadwaiti does not posit the soul as Anu. The Jiva is Anu. Yet, Vasishtadwaiti says that the Paramatman is the Antaryamin in the Jagat (universe) which is a mixture of Chit and Achit. Ramanuja's religion is rational. It is Sankhya in character. According to Sankhya, Prakriti and Purusha are eternally different. Yet the Sankhyas believe in multiplicity of souls. But, Visishtadwaita holds that the real Purusha is one and that Purusha is Saguna and that He is Iswara. The Sankhyas, on the other hand, believe that the soul is Nirguna and that there is no Iswara. We cannot but admit the existence of Chit and Achit in the relative world. Sankara also admits it. But in the absolute state there is but one. And therefore that one alone is true (Sat). Chit is Sat. Achit is neither Sat or Asat nor Sadasat; 'Sannapyasannapyubhayatmika no'. Some Dualists believe that the soul is created and that it can be destroyed by God. Other Dualists believe that the soul is eternal.

Q. Are paramanus eternal?

A. How can they be? Paramanu itself is only a conception. The Tarkikas posit a measurement for it, no doubt. But, that is to avoid the defect of indefiniteness. Logically, a paramanu is divisible. So, they are not eternal, not that they can be annihilated. For the matter of that, no object can be annihilated.

Q. What is an Avatar?

A. 'Jāta Iva' (As one born). That is what Acharya Sankara says of Krishna in his Gita-Bhashya. Brahman plus Maya is Iswara. Brahman plus Avidya is Jiva. As a matter of fact, Brahman alone is Real (Sat). So, according to Vedanta, Iswara or Brahman does not incarnate himself. It is the Adhikarika Purushas (Lords of cycles) that incarnate. Iswara being saguna and omnipotent and possessed of Chaturvyuha, a portion of this being incarnates, this is the Visishtadwaita theory. Really, it is the Adhikarika Purusha that

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incarnates. Each Kalpa has its Adhikarika Purusha. He comes down at the proper time and place. All Avataras are of one and the same being.

Q. How then, do they speak of Avataras of Vishnu, Shiva, Devi etc ?

A. Neither the Vedas, nor the Upanishads speak of the Triad of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. They are three powers. In the Upanishads, the conception of the supreme was as Brahman. But, seeing that there can be no happening without Shakti, the conception of Sakti followed. Brahman plus creative energy is Brahma. Brahman plus protective energy is Vishnu. Brahman plus destructive energy is Shiva. Protection is the object of Avatara. So Avataras of Vishnu gained predominance. These three aspects or concepts gradually got concretised and thus three corresponding forms were evolved. Later on, images and ritualism were introduced. All these are aspects or phases of the one reality.

Q. Adhikarika Purushas incarnate and show men the way to liberation. Have they themselves no liberation ?

A. He is ever perfect. Yet for the welfare of the world, he assumes the office of Adhikarika Purusha for a Kalpa period and then merges himself in Brahman for ever.

Q. What is meant by Krama Mukti and Sadyo-Mukti ?

A. Vedanta admits the two forms. Sanyasins who have attained Brahmajnana attain Mukhti here, in this life. But, those who fall short of attaining Brahmajnana and yet, are out and out satwic, attain the world of Brahma and in course of time, attain Mukti along with Brahma, after getting Brahmajnana.

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Sanyasayogat yatayah suddha Satwāh;
Tena saha kaivalyam labhamte;
Sucheenam sreematam gehe yogabhrashtobhi jayate; etc.

If, even there he fails to attain Jnana in one Kalpa, he is born with Brahma in the next Kalpa and attains Mukti. Those who have reached Brahmaloka have not to return to this world. All others -- those who reach the sun or moon or other worlds only, are born again, as declared in the Gita. Those devoted to the performance of actions go by the Dakshina-path to the worlds won by them by their punnya, and afterwards return as ordinary human beings.

Q. Can Devas be seen?

A. Yes. Although they have only subtle bodies, they can assume gross forms, materialise them. But, then, there is difference in materialisation between Devas and the lower order of beings such as Bhutas, Pretas etc. Devas' materialised forms are effulgent. They are visible only, not tangible. Those of the Bhutas are both visible and tangible. For the Devas to be perfectly visible, they must incarnate.

Q. Do Devas also incarnate, besides Iswara?

A. Yes. What is called Iswara-Avatara is the Avatara of Adhikarika Purushas. Other Devas also incarnate.

Q. Are the worlds spoken of, material ones, like Mars.

A. No, they are not material, but are planes of existence.

(P. K. Vol. XIV.)

Place :—Calicut. Date—Nov. 1928.

Q. Is not social service our foremost Dharma?

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A. Yes, according to the Christians. But, not so according to the Hindus. Social service is of ever changing forms, according to the condition and needs of the society. Charitable dispensaries, Dharmasalas and other institutions connected with social service may be good for societies which need them. But that is a better society which avoids the evils necessitating the establishment of these institutions. The western countries have such societies. In them, we don't find the necessity for the sort of service needed in India. The westerners pay due attention to their diet, physical exercise, sanitation, education and economic welfare of the members, and therefore the institutions I have mentioned are not much needed there. It appears to me foolish to ignore the causes of evils, to allow them to appear in their hideous effects, while all the time man has the power to root out the causes themselves; and when the evil effects have all duly appeared, to try to remedy them, giving your trials and efforts the ostentatious name of social reforms. It is very necessary, indeed, to serve society, to help it out of the dangers and troubles arising from causes uncontrollable by man, such as floods, earthquakes etc. An ordinary Christian has no higher aim in life than easily satisfying all his bodily wants, and therefore, he thinks of social service as an important duty. Material well-being is his ideal. The ideal of the Hindus, on the other hand, is Para-Bhakti—Supreme love -- a condition of the mind in which he cannot but love the Lord, having realised God as the source, the embodiment and quintessence of Beauty and Bliss. That kind of love does the highest good to man and to society.

Q. How is initiation given in the order of Ramakrishna?

A. In that order, there is no stereotyped method, no hard and fast rule, as in other orders in India. There are several sects among the Dualists, Saguna worshippers, Shaivas, Shaktas, Vaishnavas etc., and also

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among the Monists who are devotees of the Nirguna. Among the Advaitists, the order of Sankara, and among the Duaitists, the orders of Ramanuja, Madhwa and Sri Chaithanya are well known. Similarly there are recognised orders among Shaktas and Shaivas. These orders give the self-same mantras of their respective orders to all who go to them. The tendencies or Samskaras of the seekers are not taken into consideration at all. The desired result is therefore not produced. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was an expert physician in the spiritual realm. He could know the tendencies and Samskaras of each particular aspirant and he could treat each one as best suited his case. The mantras and injunctions, he gave to different disciples, were therefore different. Each had the freedom to worship his chosen deity. All got the desired result. In this way, Ramakrishna could initiate not only Hindus but Christians and other religionists as well, for he had realised the truth of all religions. Hence he is accepted as a World teacher To initiate each one according to his own character, temperament and Samskara is the special feature of the Ramakrishna order. In this respect, Sri Ramakrishna taught his disciples to follow his method and they are doing so.

Q. Is not Pranayama an important practice in Rajayoga?

A. By Pranayama you mean the exercise of the lungs. Rajayogis do not practise it. That sort of Pranayama has nothing to do with Rajayoga. They are mere physical exercises. If they were parts of spiritual practice, the professors of physical culture who show wonderful feats as the result of Pranayama, would have been great spiritual men as well. By the practice of that Pranayama, mental impurities cannot be removed, nor can the mind be controlled. Suppose a drunkard who has lost his balance is travelling in a cart: You may bring the horse and the cart to a standstill, but you cannot make the unbalanced drunkard sit

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still. He will be swaying to and fro. Your Pranayama may steady the cart, viz., your body and the horses, viz., your senses—but you cannot thereby stop the restlessness of the mind which is intoxicated with the wine of love, hatred etc. The mind will keep on wandering. You Malayalis were practising this Pranayama as part of your physical culture in olden days. You thought of it as physical exercise only and not as a spiritual practice. Now, you have forgotten all your physical exercise and you have become weaklings. If anybody comes and, showing you stertorous breathing, tells you that it is the very essence of Rajayoga, you readily believe him. The worst of it is that the advice given to you, as the method of this physical culture, is not on Shastric lines, and you don't therefore get the real benefit of even a physical exercise. As a result, you contract all sorts of ailments.

Q. What sort of Pranayama forms part of Rajayoga practice?

A. There is a very subtle force which controls the modifications of the mind and the movements of the life-cells. The control of that force is the Rajayogis Pranayama. Its method is to be learnt from a guru, it can't be preached broad-cast. That exercise has almost no connection with the blacksmith's bellows-exercise. I shall also tell you what results accrue from that Pranayama. Sri Ramakrishna had real Siddhi in Pranayama. To test it, some sugar was put into his mouth. It was kept there for a long time. Yet, there was no saliva in the mouth, the sugar did not get wet. He had no taste of its sweetness. It was spat out exactly in the condition in which it was put in.

Q. How can one have Bhakti?

A. As in the case of Jnana, Bhakti also is not the effect of any Karma. Bhakti is not the incoming of what was once absent, nor does it cease to exist after its once having come into being. The real nature

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of Bhakti is love. This love is natural to many. But the ordinary man misuses this inborn love. When this love is directed towards material objects, it causes desires, bondage and misery and is experienced by man in these various forms. If it has God as its object, it is called Bhakti, and its effect is constant bliss. There are certain factors which help this love to express itself as Bhakti. Selfless work done as service to God purifies the mind. As the mind gets pure, it will turn god-ward. Renunciation of sense-pleasures is another. Each man will have some special liking. That should be found out and renounced. When the strongest foe is subdued, the weaker once flee of themselves. Similarly, when the strongest ties are broken the weaker ones disappear, of themselves. Another factor is the company of real devotees. This is, in fact, the most important. As the company of drunkards gradually creates love of drink even in those who were averse to it, the company of real devotees helps to generate Bhakti even in thoroughly wordly people. The same love which was formerly expressing itself as attachment to wordly things, now shines as Bhakti. Para Bakti is most difficult to get. It is only when the Jiva sees the form of the Lord which is Beauty and Bliss embodied, and cannot help loving it, when the love is for love's own sake, then that one gets Para Bhakti. It is rarer than Jnana.

(P. K. Vol. XVIII.)

Place:—Ottapalam. Date—16th Sept. 1929.

Vedanta vijnanasunischitartah
Sanyasa yogad yatayah Suddha Satwah
Te Brahmalokeshu Paranta Kale
Paramritah Parimuchyanti sarve

The self controlled and out and out Satwic Sanyasins who are firmly established in the knowledge of Vedanta reach the abode of Brahma and are freed for ever at the end of Kalpa. This is the Religion of the Rishis.

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What is Vedanta? It means the end of Vedas.

Veda does not mean a book. A book is man's work. "Brahma Vaivedah" Vedanta is knowledge of Brahman. "Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati." A knower of Brahman becomes Brahman itself. That is the Sruti. Brahman and Brahmajnanin are one. Sruti is the teaching of such Brahmajnanins. They alone have the right to be religious teachers. In the dictum "Guru Vedanta Vakyeshu Viswasah Sraddha". Guru and Vedanta are the same. They alone can bring to light the secret of Dharma. The others are mere scholars, learned in Shastras. They do not know the real import of the Vedas, nor do they dive deep into it. When that beginningless Dharma disappears, Adhikarika Purushas or Avataras come and re-habilitate it. They alone are competent to do so. This knowledge is beginningless. The teachers of the knowledge are not different from Brahman. They are Saguna Brahman. They disclose the Nirguna state. But for them, how can man grasp the truth concerning Dharma. Pandits cannot teach it. Were there not Pandits and Rishis enough at the time of Krishna's advent? Then, why has Krishna said:

"Sa kāleneha mahata yogo nashtah paramtapa", and 'Karmākarma vikarmeti Kavayopyatra mohitāh!" etc.

"The knowledge of that Yoga was lost by lapse of time," "even the wise ones are deluded as to the nature of Karma, Akarma and Vikarma etc. If those Pandits and Rishis had that knowledge, how could Bhagavan have said so. The Gita shows that Bhagavan had a very low opinion of the texts and their interpreters. "Vedavadaratāh Partha nanyadastiti Vadinah." "Traigunyavishaya Vedāh" etc. 'Taking delight in disquisitions about Vedic texts and asserting that there is nothing nobler,' "The Vedas deal with matters within the domain of the three gunas etc." Veda does not mean rituals and ceremonials. Ritualists cannot impart that divine knowledge.

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"Parikshya lokan Karmachitan Brahmano
Nirvedam ayam nastyakritah kritena
Tadvijnanartham sa gurumevabhi gachhet,
Samitpanih Srotriyam Brahmanishtham."

"Seeing that the heavens acquired as the fruits of Karma are impermanent and lead to transmigration, the aspirant to liberation by means of knowledge should approach a Srotriya, established in Brahman with sacrificial fire-wood in hand." Thus says the Sruti. Who is a Srotriya? He who has Sravana. Is it Karmakanda that is to be heard? No! It is divine knowledge that is to be heard. It is to be heard from a Brahmanishtha -- one who is established in Brahman -- by means of Sravana, Manana and Nididhyasa. Such Adhikarika Purushas impart the jewel of that knowledge to his successors. A rich man gives his precious jewel to his successor, who in turn passes it on to his successor, and so on it goes. After the lapse of some time, it falls into the hands of men who do not know its value and throw it into a rubbish heap. Long after, there arise intelligent and learned, noble men who hear of the existence of the gem, and with the help of Shastras bring it out after much exertion. They bequeath it to the next generation and so on it goes for a time. Again it falls into the rubbish heap. Similar is the case with Dharma.

Dharma is three-fold, Adhyatmika, Adhibhautika and Adhidaivika. Adhibhautika is Politics etc. Adhidaivika is Karmakanda. Adhyatmika is spiritual. This Adhyatmika Dharma is to be learnt from Avataras and the personages who belong to that order. Pandits see but the surface. Saguna Brahman has appeared on earth at all times when Dharma has languished. In this age Bhagavan incarnated as Ramakrishna. He showed that Karmakanda (Poorvamimamsa) and scholarship has no connection with spirituality and that scholarship is not realisation. An illiterate man, not knowing the injunctions of Karmakanda, to impart the

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Highest Truth! That is simply preposterous! So thought the Pandits and they came to challenge him. They marvelled at his greatness and went their way. They indeed are blessed who receive His grace. They are blessed who surrender themselves to Him.

(*From notes taken down by one present on the occasion.*)

Place :—Swami Turiyanandaji's Hall : Sri Ramakrishna Sevashrama, Benares.

Date—25th Feb. 1928.

Swami Nirmalanandaji is seated in the hall. Bimal and I went over there, prostrated and sat down. Gradually, Jogin, Jagadananda, Gurudas, Heerananda, Moti, and Hari Das came in, prostrated and seated themselves in the hall.

Swami Nirmalanandaji said that he was brought up in Benares during his early years. Then R. questioned thus: "If so, how did you get the opportunity to meet Sri Ramakrishna or Swami Vivekananda?"

S. It was to Sri Ramakrishna that I went first, and not to Swami Vivekananda. I was not even acquainted with the latter at that time. After finishing my studies here, I went to Calcutta to pursue my studies in the College. You have seen that quarter where Sanyal Mahasaya's house is situated now; that is only a portion of our ancestral property. Nivedita Lane and the tank on that side formerly belonged to us. The quadrangle in front of the house occupied by the Boses now in Bosepara Lane, was the place where we, boys, used to meet. There, we were chatting one day, when we heard that Paramahamsa had come to the house of the New Kayasthas. (Balaram Bose had recently purchased that property from the Banerjies who were Brahmins and so the house was called thus.) At once, all the boys ran. I also hurried to my house, put on a chadar, (for I was not much acquainted with the Boses at that time) went to Balaram's house and found that the hall was full. In the middle of the hall, there was spread a carpet on a small cushion with

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pillows on. Paramahamsa was not there. I was but a lad of 17 or 18 summers and did not venture to go in, as many of the elders of that quarter were seated in the room. On the left side of the room was a verandah and I leaned against the wall there. I learnt that the Paramahamsa had gone in, so that the ladies of the house may have an opportunity to meet him. A little later, I saw a person clad in a towel of garua colour (I think that he had gone to the water-closet) with leather slippers on, coming through the door of the water-closet towards me. His eyes seemed not to observe anything, as if in a state of reverie, they were half-closed. Behind him, there were a few persons. I did not know them. Suddenly, he came to the place where I was standing and looked at me. Afterwards he went and entered the hall. At that moment, Oh! God! I felt a thrill from head to foot and I was inclined to weep. I ran away to my house and laid myself on my bed. I said to myself—'Oh! what a kind of Paramahamsa! I shall not go that way again.' This was my first meeting with the Master.

(In reply to some questions, the Swami said Turiyanandaji belonged to our part of the Town. I had heard that he used to go to the Paramahamsa of Dakshineswar. But I did not know that the Paramahamsa of Dakshineswar was this Paramahamsa.)

One Ekadasi day (probably a Sunday), Turiyanandaji told me "let us go for a bath in the Ganges. (At that time, Turiyanandaji used to fast during day time on Ekadasi days, and take some refreshments at night.) From there we shall go to meet the Paramahamsa of Dakshineswar." I accompanied him to the Ganges. After bathing, he hired a boat and went to Dakshineswar with some others. I returned home, took my meals and walked all the way to Dakshineswar. Turiyanandaji and others were already there. Sri Ramakrishna had gone out. We walked all round and saw

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the various things to be seen there. At night fall, I went back to Sri Ramakrishna's room to perform my salutations there, before returning. I found that there were many pictures in the room. Near the place where the vessel of water was placed was a photograph of Sri Ramakrishna. I pointed it out to Turiyanandaji and asked him whose photo it was. He replied that it was the photo of Sri Ramakrishna. I remarked that I had already seen him at Balaram Babu's house. Then Turiyanandaji exclaimed " So you have already met him ?"

In the course of the conversation the Swami spoke as follows:—There is a movement now-a-days to make a classification in this manner. So and so is a two annas disciple. So and so, four annas, and so on. Wherefrom did these people know all this? We are still living. They are introducing all such fables. For instance, Swami Vasudevananda once wrote something about Saradanandaji and read it over to him. Saradanandaji said, "What! I myself know nothing about this ! " This is the way such people work. " So and so is a four annas disciple and so and so, a two annas one ; he is like this or that and so on." What do these things matter to you? Do you know everything? What does this master of Sankuchunni (Akshaya Kumar Sen, the author of Sri Sri Ramakrishna Punthi) or Master Mahasaya (Mahendra Nath Gupta, the author of Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita) know? Mahendra was a schoolmaster. On holidays, he used to go to the Master and preserve notes of what he heard then. How many days have they been with him, and what do they know in fact? And these are the authorities for these people. Again, we find in many modern books such statements as the following—Sri Ramakrishna himself gave Sanyasa to so and so and not to so and so. Do you know the real fact? After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda took me from my house to the Mutt. After a few days' coming and going, Swamiji said "where would you go ? Stay here."

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From that time, I lived in the Baranagore Mutt. Then, one day, Swamiji selected the Mantras necessary for taking Sanyas from the Mahanirvana Tantra and gave Sanyas to all of us. Sarat, Sashi, Kali, Latu, Gopal Senior, Maharaj (Swami Brahmanandaji), Baburam (Premananda), all of us received Sanyas from Swami Vivekananda. Later on, Mahapurushaji (Swami Shivananda) Swamis Vijnanananandaji, Niranjanananandaji and Trigunatita took Sanyas themselves in the shrine of Sri Ramakrishna. Swamiji gave us the Sanyasin names. He named Sashi as Ramakrishnanandaji and said "I myself wanted to have this name. Well, let Sashi have it. For no one has served the Master like him."

Q. When did Swami Vivekananda take Sanyas ?

S. Whatever he had to do had already been done for him by Sri Ramakrishna. Do you think that We are his gurubhais ? If Swamiji merely Wished, thousands like myself would be created. Whatever he had to do or had to be done for him, had been already done by Sri Ramakrishna. Swamiji himself has told me "See, a ghost has entered inside me, the same that was in Sri Ramakrishana. That has entered in this (Pointing to himself) and is making me do what it likes. It does not leave me, it does not give me amoment of rest." Getting a little of this Shakti, Abhedanandaji has been able to accomplish So much. What was his former path and in what way did he proceed later on ? Sri Ramakrishna himself told Swamiji thus. "What did you do : After ten months of pregnancy, abortion has been effected by you ! I have to mould him now in a different manner." Are we their Gnrubhais ? No, not at all. We are Jivas and they are Shivas—Gods who have descended here, taking human bodies. Once I was in the mountains. It was the year in which a religious conference was held in Calcutta under the auspices of the Vivekananda Society. Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) who was then in Madras, called me over to take charge of the Ashrama in Bangalore. One day, while at

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Madras, Maharaj got angry and did not talk for some hours with Ramakrishnanandaji. The latter became restless, fell at his feet and declared: "Are you angry with me? If you pass water, lakhs and lakhs like myself will be created at once." See, what faith! you say that we are all equals, his co-disciples, brothers, is it not so? Did Saradanandaji ever think in that way? How much of devotion and faith he had towards them? Those are the ideas of Hindustani people. "These are all the disciples of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa." That Shakti which was in Swamiji went over afterwards to Maharaj, Premanandaji etc., and worked wonders. Have you not read one of the last letters of Swamiji when the Shakti left him? He has written therein, "The child of the Mother is sleeping on Her lap etc."

Q. Is then the classification into Jivakoti, Iswarakoti etc., that we have heard so much, mere fancy?

S. No. Sri Ramakrishna himself has said that four were Iswarakotis. Swamiji's case is different. Sri Ramakrishna did not place him in any particular class. The Master used to say: 'I have brought him from Kasi.' How many things have the Master told us about Swamiji and the Master has forbidden us from telling them to Swamiji. We have not spoken of these things to others and we shall not speak. They will be buried with us. After Swamiji's return from America, Yogananda told something, hearing which Swamiji began to weep and became restless. He wanted to give up his body. The Maharaj patted him on the back and comforted him. Maharaj was very angry with Yoganandaji and rebuked him. The latter said "I have made a mistake, brother. I shall not do it, again." Swamiji was not included in any class by Sri Ramakrishna. So, leaving apart the case of Swamiji, these four, viz., Yogananda, Niranjanananda, Brahmananda and Premananda were classed as Iswarakotis by the Master.

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Q. What about Noren Junior, Narayana, Tarak and Purna. We have heard that Sri Ramakrishna said, "By Purna's coming, it has become complete. No one will come hereafter." What is the meaning of all this?

S. All this is your fancy. The Master has not said in that sense about Purna. What he said was this: "Those who were to have come to him have come and no one will come hereafter. There is no question of Jivakoti or Iswarakoti in this saying. Purna was in fact one of the last to go to the Master.

About Maharaj he had told us 'Krishna on the lotus etc'. Though we had not mentioned this to Maharaj, he himself said about "Krishna on the lotus etc." during his last days. Oh! they are all gods who have come down to the earth taking human bodies. Ah! This D—, Swami N—, told the other day that they (the young men who had gone to the Mutt) were of the revolutionary party! So, Swami Premanandaji called them over one day to his room, at Dacca, closed the door and tried to make them realise the folly of the step they were taking. But they would not be convinced, and began to discuss with him. Then Swami Premanandaji told them: "You have become learned by studying English! Is it not so?" After saying thus, he pressed the shoulder of D—who was one of those who were discussing hotly. At once, his arguing attitude left him and his whole life was changed, transformed. Is this the work of an ordinary man? You are under the impression that Swami Premanandaji had no disciples. But, I know that he had three or four initiated disciples. Yogananda Swami also had a few disciples. Do these facts find a place in your books?

During my second visit, I had the privilege of meeting both Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother together. One day, at noon, I went to Dakshineswar. Sri Ramakrishna was taking his meals. I did not know at that time that one should not prostrate before a

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person while he is taking meals. So, I went, prostrated and sat down. The Master was not displeased at this. He talked to me, smiling all the time. When his meals were over, a lady came from the verandah near the side of the Nahabat and removed the plate, the seat etc. There was no one else in the room. As I was a mere boy, she had no delicacy in entering the place and doing the work. Later, I came to know that she was the Holy Mother. Some time after meals, Sri Ramakrishna went to the Jautala to answer the calls of nature. Ramlal or some other person accompanied him. I do not remember exactly who it was. Also, I did not know many persons who were there at that time. The Master went placing his hand on my shoulder. While returning Sri Ramakrishna sat at the place in Panchavati where a branch of the banyan tree had fallen on the ground. Then he began to talk with the Mother in the state of Bhavasamadhi. I could not, of course, hear the talk of the Mother. I was able to understand bits of the words of the Master.

Q. What did Sri Ramakrishna say?

S. All those things are personal. Why should you know them? "The human Guru gives the Mantra in the ear and the divine Guru in the heart (or the soul)." Afterwards, towards nightfall, I prostrated and returned home. He told me 'come again.' In the course of the conversation he repeated. "Ah! The human Guru imparts the Mantra to the ear and the Guru of the universe to the heart." What all things he said! But, what right has the world to know about them? And what do you gain by knowing those things? Since fables are gaining currency even while we are still alive, I said so much. Why, in your Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna (Kathamrita), is there anything given of what Sri Gurumaharaj said to the Grihasta Bhaktas while staying in the Cossipore Garden? It was about the Grihasta disciples and still Master Mahasaya has made no mention of it.

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Q. He has said something about it.

S. What has he mentioned? Listen, Sri Ramakrishna said: "This Ram, Girish etc., some of them attend office and some have started theatres. They come and say. "I am Purna Brahman." They are resorting to the houses of disreputable characters, frequenting them throughout the day..... They have come to find out the Avatara and they say that I am the Supreme Brahman, Purna Brahman!" And these are your authorities. When Swami Vivekananda gathered us together at the Baranagore Mutt, then these very people began to raise a hue and cry that Norendra, was spreading his own doctrines and creating a different sect of his own, as if these people had understood everything of Sri Ramakrishna! To try to understand the great Master without understanding Swamiji is in vain. Swamiji alone understood Sri Ramakrishna fully and he made us clearly grasp as much as we were capable of receiving. Swamiji, a veritable Sankara, received in his head the Ganges of knowledge and gave it freely to others. x x At times Maharaj would be speechless and filled with emotion touching Swamiji. Maharaj would feel as if he were touching the great Master. Swamiji would then say "come Rakhal, come", and pat his back and comfort him so that he may regain his normal state.

How many stories are being heard of the giving of the Kashaya (gerua cloth). It is said that Sri Ramakrishna gave to certain persons the gerua cloth. But it is not true. Well, what is the real fact? Gopal Senior, (Advaitananda Swami), as many others do as a fashion when their wives pass away—clad himself in the gerua cloth (just as Nirvedananda's brother has done) and came to Sri Ramakrishna. He had brought some other gerua clothes. Seeing that, Sri Ramaksishna told him: "These are boys with Suddha Satva. Give them these clothes." Accordingly Gopaladada gave us these gerua clothes. This is the real story. See how much it has been exaggerated.

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What do you gain by knowing all these things? For instance, at one tims Sri Ramakrishna performed the Puja for our sake at Cossipore and gave us the Prasad of Kali Puja. Saradanandaji was not there at the time. When he came next day, he was given the Prasad. But all those are personal matters. Why should you know these things? You merely try to understand and reflect in your life what they have taught you. These Shastras, Sankara Bhashya etc. why should you study all these? What good will it do? Your brain will become more confused, that is all. But in the first stages, a little of those things is also necessary. After work, you can rest and enjoy yourselves. Otherwise if you stay in your bed day and night, you will be idle and never progress. In this way, even the Shastras are of some use. As Sri Sankara has said "Nahi nahi rakshati dukrinj karane". Give up diplomacy and do something. Do you think that you are specially fortunate that you have been chosen. This is like scavenger Rama joining the Police Department. He has got many powers and privileges. The cars and carriages of the biggest men could be stopped by him since he has all the strength of the Police force behind him. So also you may think that you are very fortunate in having been selected for His (the Lord's) work, for His service. But, if constable Rama is to misbehave, his uniform will be taken from him and he will be expelled. Then he will again become the old scavenger Rama. In the same manner, if you conduct yourself wrongly, your authority will be taken away and you will be expelled.....Persevere, in time you will be able to know everything by His grace. In my own case, the older I grow, the more I am able to appreciate His words by His grace. (Swamiji also narrated an incident saying the way in which the Master taught his disciples.) One day many devotees belonging to the Brahmo Samaj came to pay their respects to the Master. Swami Akhandananda was also there; Sri Ramakrishna asked the Brahmo Bhaktas to retire

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now and then to a solitary spot, cook their own food which should be vegetarian and call upon God with all their heart and soul. Swami Akhandananda was for a long time in the habit of preparing his own diet which was vegetarian. So he was very much pleased to hear the Master talking thus and he said: "I have been doing like this for a long time." Then Sri Ramakrishna replied: "Why should you do like this? Behave naturally."

That, night, a conversation took place in the Office Room.

Q. What is the meaning of Sri Ramakrishna's saying, viz., those who go over here will have no more birth?

S. The meaning is that those who will accept his ideal will have no more rebirth. You have an idea that when Purna came to the Master, the list of those who were to go to him had become complete. Is it so? Did Sri Ramakrishna incarnate only for a few such individuals? Give up such narrow, fanatical notions. What was the necessity for an Avatar for a few persons? Not so, not at all! He is the uncle moon! He came for the sake of all humanity, for the whole universe, especially for the good of India. When I was going to the West, I heard near the precincts of Italy, the European men and women shouting in joy "Luna Italiana" the moon of Italy. Is the moon really the moon of Italy alone? He is the uncle moon; the uncle of all, the moon of the whole world. Mathur Babu once told Sri Ramakrishna "Sire, many Bhaktas will come to you here after, is it not so? When will they come? If they were to come now, I could be very happy with them." Sri Ramakrishna replied: "How can they come all at once now? Some of them are just learning to walk, some are walking on all fours, some are in the womb and some have not yet taken birth." Again, are these words of the Master found in any of your books? See! "Many Bhaktas will come whose

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language I myself do not know. They speak in a peculiar manner. Again, such Bhaktas will come to me who, though they are men, bore their ears and wear ornaments (ear rings)." At that time, we could not believe his words. As I am now staying in the South, I find the people there with these characteristic traits, the boring of their ears, the wearing of ear rings, and the peculiar mode of pronunciation. I was very much surprised at the truth of his words. They can never be false. Sri Ramaksishna told Keshab Chandra Sen about Swamiji: "See, Keshab, you have got one power which has made you so much respected and honoured by the world. But Noren has got eighteen such powers.' Where was the world famous Keshab and where was the college boy Norendranath! And what are we witnessing now. Every word of his has come out to be literally true. And what faith and devotion Keshab Chandra Sen had towards Sri Ramakrishna. Once, the former took the Master to the third story of his house, requested him to stand on the seat where he used to meditate, offered flowers etc. at his feet and worshipped him. On that side, there was a picture of Kali, the Mother. They were Brahmos and so ought not to have worshipped God with form. So, Keshab told Sri Ramakrishna: "Be kindly pleased not to reveal this matter to any one." But the nature of Sri Ramakrishna was like that of a child; so, on his return, he told Vijaya Krishna Goswami, Pratab Mazumdar, Shivanath Shastri and other Brahmo Bhaktas: "See, Keshab offered Puja to me in such and such a manner and afterwards told me not to reveal it to others. "Oh! what devotion Keshab had for the Master! Whatever the Master said was listened to with great attention and in silence by Keshab, whereas Vijaya Krishna Goswami and others used to discuss with him. But what faith Keshab had in the Master. He used to hear him without any argument or discussion. "Don't move him hither and thither. Otherwise, his body will not be able to stand the strain. He must be kept in a

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show case. People may look at him from the outside, and pay their respects. He is not a person to be taken or moved hither and thither." So said Keshab to some Bhaktas. Before the photograph of Sri Ramakrishna in his sitting posture was taken, there were two other photos of the Master, one with his hands placed on a wall and with one end of the Dhoti on his shoulder and the other supported by Hridaya. The Master would not allow his photo to be taken except in the state of Bhava. So, Bhavanath and other boy Bhaktas were ever keeping the camera ready. When Sri Ramakrishna was in the state of Samadhi, his photo was taken in haste. Many days later, it was printed and a copy shown to him. He was very much delighted at seeing the same and said: "Where did you get this? Bring some flowers and sandal. Mother is inside this photo. She herself has come and taken Her abode herein." Saying thus, he worshipped the photo with flowers, sandal etc., and said, "this picture will be worshipped in many houses hereafter." What do we see now? Can his words be untrue. Every word has been proved to be true. I shall tell you of my experience in a certain place in the South. Once I was in a village in the interior part. I went to a temple there. Besides the images of Shiva, Vishnu, and other gods, a photo of our Master was also there. The people of the place did not know that I belonged to the Ramakrishna Mission. I asked them "whose is this photo?' Then, they said that it was Perumalswamy. Perumal means Bhagavan. Just think of it! Every word of His has come out true. Have you not read this Stotra of Sri Ramakrishna composed by Swamiji, "Achandala Prathatarayo x x x Soyam Jatah Prathita Purusha Ramakrishnastvidanim" Believe, Belive, Believe. By belief one can realise God. He is very remote from arguments. In the Gita, the Lord after dealing elaborately with Jnana, Yoga, Karma, Bhakti etc., says in the end "Samsayatma Vinasyati," the doubter perishes. So, don't doubt any more, believe. When Purna came,

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the party of Bhaktas had become complete! All such statements are due to fanaticism and sectarianism. For raising or giving Mukti to a few such souls, what is the need for God's incarnation? Remember His words. "Those who come here are very fortunate. They will have no more re-birth." That is, those who accept his new Bhava (this ideal of his) will have no further re-incarnation. It is indeed your great good fortune that you have come here, within the sphere of his influence, his ideals. He has unbounded mercy on you. His infinite grace is on you. Believe, believe. Do not think that, because a person seems to be a sinner in our eyes, the grace of God is not on him. He is the Ocean of Mercy. He has taken the human body on account of His grace towards us. The sinner also will certainly get Mukti. These are his very words. However sinful a man may appear to us, if he but once comes within the sphere of His influence, he will have no more re-birth. Swamiji has said: "The Lord has not yet given up His subtle body. People are able to see Him even now." Believe in these words of Swamiji, try to understand them and you will realise. Believe in this.

Q. Swamiji, Sri Ramakrishna used to say: "The wind of His Grace is ever blowing. Unfold your sail". What is the meaning of this?

S. (After a brief pause.) "Do something and try to get within the range of the wind of His Grace. Afterwards, you will not have to exert yourself in any way. Have you not seen the boatmen bring the boat to the Ganges with great labour and exertion, pulling oars with all their might and then they raise the sail and take rest, smoking and enjoying all the time, and the boat goes on under the favourable wind. So also we have to work hard, advance somehow or other in the beginning. But when once we are within the sphere of influence of His Grace, everything will be accomplished by itself. Then you need not work so hard. Modern science says that there is the force of

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gravitation. If you throw a stone upwards, it will fall down. But if you can throw it beyond the range of the force of gravitation of the earth, the stone will not return to the earth. In the same manner, we have to exert a little in the beginning, we have to go beyond the power of attraction. Then everything will be done by itself. Also, is there any limit to His Grace? Do you not see your Latu Maharaj (Swami Adbhutananda) whose memorial temple has been erected by you of late and who is being worshipped by you now. What was he to start with? He was but a shepherd of Chapra (in Behar). He came to Calcutta in search of a job, as many boatmen on the side of the Ganges do now. Ramachandra Dutt made him his peon. Afterwards he was employed to do services such as rubbing oil etc. to Sri Ramakrishna. But what a wonderful transformation. Sri Ramakrishna made him the Great Swami Adbhutanandaji. What a contrast between the illiterate shepherd of Chapra and the Siddha Swami Adbhutanandaji! What infinite and unbounded grace!

Q. Is the first step of B— of S —due to His grace?

S. Surely, That also is His Grace. This also is his power; without His grace, can anything be accomplished? But this is limited. Do you not remember what I told you the other day at the Adwaita Ashrama in the course of a conversation? Suppose you change a rupee into annas, pies etc. Even though the half pie or lower coin has not the same money value as the rupee, still it has got some value. In fact the anna and the pie are only parts of a rupee. In the same manner, even the first meeting is due to His grace. This is finite. Through the finite it is manifesting and so we are able to understand or grasp the infinite. Though it is finite, yet it is His own power. There is some fractional value even for it. (Swamiji recited a verse of Ramaprasad, the substance of which is this. "Oh Mother, I live and move by your power. Yet I think that I am moving and turning by my own power.)

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Sri Ramakrishna says: "Potatoes, brinjals etc., seem to dance by themselves in the cooking pot, because of the fire underneath." This is the truth. Is it within the power of man to do anything. The kitten merely mews; that is, calls upon its mother and the latter sometimes places it on the roof and sometimes on the bed of rich persons. But the kitten does not heed anything; it merely mews. Whatever the mother does is considered good by it. Can man do anything by his own effort? When the child is born, it merely cries helplessly. The mother cleanses the child of its dirt in which it lies and takes it on her arms. If the child were to think that it will cleanse itself and then go to its mother, what will be the result? Can it ever do so? It has no power to cleanse itself. So, mother goes near the child, cleanses it, takes it on her arms and kisses it. That is the only way. It has been said by Ramaprasad: "Taking cleanliness and uncleanliness and sleeping in the divine mansion, one can realise the Mother." We should do like that. Try to become pure by your effort; that is, make your mind pure and go to the Mother. Then alone can anything be really accomplished. Have you not heard this incident in Sri Ramakrishna's life. Once, Hridaya and Sri Ramakrishna were going to Calcutta. The Master's nature was like that of a child. He answered the calls of nature sitting on the sand near the pathway. At the same time he made an image of Shiva with sand and worshipped it as children do in play. He had no consciousness of cleanliness and uncleanliness. During my boyhood I saw Trailinga Swami many a time having no external consciousness. He used to answer the calls of nature without any consciousness. If any one gave him anything to eat at that time, he used to eat it. He will fall in water and remain there. At the time of intense heat, he will lie on the flight of steps of the stairs leading to the Ganges. He did not mind anything. He had no idea of cleanliness or uncleanliness. This is the real state of affairs. Everything is His Grace. "Thou art the Karma, the Dharma, the fruit of the work and

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everything." What can you do? He, the Lord, is inside impelling you; then only can you do anything. As I said a while ago, this also has some money value. Otherwise nothing can be done.

(That very night at 6-30 P. M.)

Q. Can one who is not an Iswara-koti incarnate with Avatara? (The doubt was this. Sri Ramakrishna said: "I saw Sarat and Sashi in the company of Jesus Christ and Balaram and others in the company of Sri Chaitanya Deva." If they are not Iswarakotis, how did they incarnate with Sri Ramakrishna. Since they were born as the Parshadas (companions) of the Avataras of old, can it be that they have not attained Mukti as yet? This cannot be believed. Yet, Swami Nirmalananda had said in the morning that there were only four Iswarakotis. Hence this question.)

S. Yes. Such a one can incarnate along with an Avatara.

Q. How can it be? Because they should have merged with the Lord. How can they return? Sri Ramakrishna has said: "If a Jiva were to go there once, he cannot return. The salt doll melts in the water and becomes one with the ocean."

S. No. It is not in that sense. They have the desire to partake in the lila of the Lord. So they do not merge completely. Have you not heard of Salokya, Sarupya, and other different kinds of Mukti. Suppose a pure glass bottle well corked, is thrown into the Ganges. Though all around it is water, still it keeps a separate existence. Similary though they are immersed in the ocean of Sachidananda, they wish to play with the Lord, and so they take up a human body and incarnate.

Q. In the case of Jivas like ourselves, those who have got grace, initiation etc., from revered souls like you, if we die before getting realisation what will be our state?

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S. You will get Mukti. Otherwise His words will be untrue. Can they ever be untrue? At the last moment at least, he will certainly get realisation. He will surely become free. However it may be, such a person will surely have realisation in the end.

Q. Kindly recite that sloka which declares that whether I give up my body to-day or after an age, I am Brahman always.

Swamiji (Smiling) :—

Dēhastishtatu Kalpantām
Gachchatwadyaiva vā punah
Kwa vriddih kvacha va hanir
Mama Chinmātra rūpinah

(*Notes taken by Swami Amalanandaji*)

Place :—Ottapalam. Date—24th Nov. 1923.

Swamiji said:—Sri Ramakrishna is Mother Divine. We are His children. Mother knows the wants of her children, what they should be fed with. You need not ask for anything. Realisation perfected, she will give. Sri Gurumaharaj has cooked rice and very nice things and we are invited to partake of them. We have simply to fall to. There is no need of tapasya or meditation. Have faith in Him, the faith of Nachiketas, the faith that will move mountains from your path. He and His cause are one. Work for His cause with your whole heart and soul. Our energy is to be used for that. He has the key of the chest of realisation in His hands. He wanted Swami Vivekananda to do His work. After the work was finished, the Swami realised the Highest and went into Samadhi. The key is handed over to his children for the good of humanity.

Obedience is the first duty of a child of Gurumaharaj. There is only one Christ, one Buddha and one Ramakrishna. Work after realisation? Absurd! What is the command of Swami Vivekananda. Fools

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go after God-realisation. They do not understand the spirit of the Swami's teachings. They are like the birds that sit on the top of the mast of a ship. The birds fly hither and thither, but the mast is their only place of rest. They also will get salvation. But, it will take time. Do unselfish work, not for your wife and children, not for your own happiness and salvation which is already assured. Only, we must have faith. Sri Gurumaharaj is our divine milch-cow. He will give whatever we want and He will take care of all. Is the Police Constable to obey only after knowing the plan of the Police Commissioner? Sri Gurumaharaj is the Commissioner and Swamiji is His Chief Assistant. We are all His constables. Obey the Commander-in-Chief. Why should you know his plans. The soldier's interest in his wife and children and others will be taken care of by the Commander. Let our body, mind and soul be our commanders. Swami Vivekananda is the Senani, Commander-in-Chief, Lord Subramania. Obey him and success will be yours. No use of ochre robe or Swami or Ananda without faith. Sri Gurumaharaj is no form or person, but a principle. Never look at the form, but always to the principle. The same principle that manifested as Rama and as Krishna is now Ramakrishna. You may question the historicity of Rama or Krishna but not of Ramakrishna. Times and circumstances and mental conditions have also changed as to cause the necessity for an Avatara. Human wants have changed. The form of Rama or Krishna is not suited to this time to effect the spiritual conquest of the world. Hence the principle manifested itself in the form of Ramakrishna. The salvation of humanity and the vitality of the various religions consist in accepting the principle, the Vedantic bed-rock, "Nayam Atma Pravachanena Labhyah." The Atman is not to be obtained by much discussion, but by renunciation alone. The forms may differ. What matters it? Ramakrishna came to vitalise all forms, the old as well as the new. He came to prove that the essence of all Vedas, Puranas and Upanishads is true, that all religions

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are true. These are His words. Sri Ramakrishna is Sri Ramakrishna. A flash will come and then you will understand. Now, have faith in what I say. Have adamantine faith and unswerving obedience, and everything will come. You have renounced everything and surrendered yourself at His feet. You have insured your life. It is safe in His hand. He is the uncle moon of all, from the Brahmin to the Chandala.

Sincerity, character, purity, these are the foundation on which you have to build. Untiring work is the brick, patience is the cement.

Look at Sri Krishna, what an autocrat! Every one should worship Him! Otherwise, there is no salvation! Worship Indra and others, you will be born again and again. "Give up all Dharmas and take refuge in Me." (Sarva dharman parityajya mamekam sarana vraja)! What an autocrat! There is no committee Government. But note this, His words -- the Gita -- the essence of all Vedas and Upanishads, is meant for all, not for the Brahmins alone, but for all men, down to the lowest Chandalas. He was the perfect autocrat to establish the widest spiritual democracy. "Vidya Vinayasampanne....." It is the one that has become the many. Arjuna was Krishna in another form and other environments. The words addressed to him are meant for all humanity, for the salvation of all. Through them, Vedanta was broadcasted to the whole world. Once again it was broadcasted to the four corners of the earth from the platform of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. The form may be different, but the principle is the same. The modern world was told in modern words that all religions are true. That truth will be accepted and that truth will triumph in the end. The source from which it emerged may be denied by many. But impartial historians will trace it to the Blazing Fire of spirituality under the banyan tree at Dakshineswar. Sri Krishna and Ramakrishna are the same. It is not

The Gita for all humanity.

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that everyone will worship the form, the person, the photo of Sri Gurumaharaj, but every one will ultimately accept His principles, the truths that He taught and Swamiji proclaimed. What a marvel was Ramakrishna, what a great reservoir of concentrated spirituality which is more than enough to deluge the whole world! Bhagavan acquired all that not for Himself but for all the world. What a life work it was to gather and store so much! Who has done so much before? Bhagavan gave that treasure to Swamiji who in his turn gave it to so many. Through them the spiritual current will flow to many a parched field and it will so go on until the whole store is distributed among all according to the need, receptivity and character of each individual or nation. Remember always the spiritual dynamo and circuit made complete.

Boldness is an indispensable virtue. To have it, is not to have too much of self-consciousness which will rob you of your boldness. The self-conscious man pauses, hesitates, calculates, weighs anxiously the pros a cons of a thing for long before he commits himself to a statement or action. That is not the way. Dash your present convictions, whether right or wrong. Let your very posture show the boldness of your convictions.

In the initial stages of our spiritual life, there is need for a guru. Later on, you will find that the external guru is dispensed with and your consciousness becomes the guru. In the beginning also it was really your own consciousness that was your guru, for it was that consciousness that inspired you to approach the external guru.

In prayer, there is an outpouring of the heart's desire to your Ishtam and hence it pre-supposes words.

Meditation is of two kinds. In one, you meditate upon your Ishtam. In the other, you merge yourself in your Ishtam. The Christians have only prayers, not meditation.

Never identify yourself with any creed,
No word of condemnation for any.

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(*Extracts from the notes of Sri K. J. Chengappa*)

Place:—A rented room in the Office of the Vedanta Society, Mercara, Coorg.

Date—1917.

Mr. A. Rama Rao, (President of the Society, Assistant Inspector of Schools), Rao Sahib H. Chennaiya and several others were present. There were also European visitors.

A devotee:—Swamiji! is it not wrong to kill animals to propitiate God?

Swamiji:—Why is it wrong?

D. God does not require it. He will not be pleased with it.

S. Does your God want cocoanuts and plantains? Will He be pleased with them?

D. I am pleased with them. It pleases me to offer cocoanuts and plantains.

S. Similarly the person that offers animals thinks that his God will be pleased with the animals that he offers. God does not require either his offerings of animals or your offerings of cocoanuts and plantains.

Offering to God.

Does He feel hungry? All the fruits and animals come from Him. We offer Him the thing we like, what in our view are the best. It is not, therefore, right to say that the person who offers animals is wrong or that his offering is not acceptable to God and that yours is acceptable. That is where we go wrong. We should not condemn any sincere offering or religious practice as bad. They do not know a better way. From their standpoint, their offering and practice are good and correct. Condemnation makes them doubtful or irreligious. That is not the way to correct and improve peoples' ways. They must be told "What you are doing is good and acceptable to God. But there is a better way. It is a cheaper and less

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injurious to life. Your God will be equally pleased with you if you offer cocoanuts, plantains and other fruits. He will be equally pleased even if a flower or a little pure water or a leaf is offered with devotion." When he is established in that practice, he must be led up, saying—"God does not require even those fruits. He is the giver of everything. What is there that is not His and that He has not? He will be fully satisfied and pleased with you if you simply pray, even mentally because he is not far away from us. He resides within us, in our hearts." In this way he must be led up from where he is standing, and not kicked down by condemnation.

A European visitor:—(After hearing the Swami for long and being highly pleased with his ready and satisfactory answers to questions.) How is it, Swamiji, that your religion is very interesting whereas in ours we find no interest at all.

S. Not so. There is interest in your religion as well. It depends upon our understanding of what Christ has said. He also has taught Dwaita, Visishtadwaita and Adwaita, the three grades of realisation, the three systems of philosophy taught by the Vedanta. When Christ said: 'I and my Father in Heaven', he spoke Dwaita; when he said: "We are all the children of our Father in Heaven' he spoke Visishtadwaita and when he said: "I and my Father in Heaven are one" he spoke pure Adwaita, the culmination of Vedanta. Do you not know that he first taught to a set of fishermen. And fishermen, you know, could not understand abstruse philosophy. So he taught them in parables and in words which his hearers could understand.

Another visitor—Sri Krishna is said to be an Avatara of God. At the same time it is said that he was stealing butter and that he was having thousands of wives and having amours with the wives of others. How can these be reconciled?

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S, If you accept Sri Krishna as God, he must be considered above all the vices imputed to him. If he were a mere human being, would it have been possible for him to have such a large number of wives? No! What are we to understand, then? It is that he was a great Yogi, above all sexual impulse. That is why thousands of women were gathering round him. A woman's highest conception of love is that of a husband. All those women, therefore, out of fullness of love towards God Krishna conceived him as their husband, as illustrated by a line in a song in the Rasaleela. 'Oh Krishna, it is not only us that thou makest happy, but all beings, but thou art also the Atman in every being." The Purana is meant for ill-developed intellects and is therefore couched in the language of the world in order to create interest in the story of the Lord. When we take a fancy for a thing, for instance, a rose, we are not satisfied with merely looking at it, we want to pluck it, even then we are not fully satisfied, we want to smell it, make it one with ourselves. That is why the Gopis considered Him as their husband with whom they could be one. Have you not heard the story that Devarshi Narada asked Krishna for one of the thousands of his wives and on being permitted to have any one with whom Krishna was not present, he went to one after another and found that there was none with whom Krishna was not. Is it possible for a human being to be so present with every one of the thousands? He was therefore an Incarnation of God and a great Incarnation at that!

Sri Krishna.

Another visitor—Swamiji, people say that there are ghosts? Do they exist in fact?

S. Certainly, Yes. I had the privilege of shaking hands with a ghost in America. Ghost is but an earth-bound soul, i.e., a soul dying with unfulfilled desires. Such souls remain in subtle forms called ghosts, until the desires they had while in their gross bodies are

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satisfied or become impossible. For example, suppose when a man died he had a daughter whom he wanted to give in marriage and that desire was upper-most in his mind. He would remain in the subtle body until his daughter was either married or her marriage became impossible by her death or otherwise.

Place :—Ponnampet. Date—1927.

Swamiji was seated under a pandal in front of an office building.

Mr. Kushalappa (M.L.C.) :—What is the difference between Ramakrishnaism and other religions ?

The religion of Sri Ramakrishna.

S. There is no such thing as Ramakrishnaism. Ramakrishna did not create a sect. He did not teach anything new. He only re-stated Hinduism even which term is a misnomer, in as much as the religion commonly called Hinduism is not a sectarian religion, but the Universal religion. Sri Ramakrishna taught Vedantic religion, but in words and manner suited to the needs of the times. The difference between Vedantic religion, the religion which he lived and taught, and the other religions, is the difference between the footprint of an elephant and those of the other animals. The footprints of the other animals can be contained in that of the elephant, but the elephant's cannot be contained in those of the others. So the Vedantic religion taught by Sri Ramakrishna has place for all the other religions, but the others cannot contain the Vedantic religion commonly called Hinduism.

Another visitor :—Who is the father of God ?

S. Who is your father ?

V. Man.

S. So God's father is God.

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V. God's father's father?

S. Your father's father?

V. Man.

S. Similarly God's father's father is God.

Place :—Ottapalam. Date—5th Mar. 1938.

Several devotees are present. Swamiji spoke as follows :—

Now-a-days non-resistance is being freely advocated. How many are there competent to practise that? What dire consequences will it bring about! In order to practise non-resistance, one must have full power to resist. It is only after acquiring full power to resist that one becomes fit to practise non-resistance. Otherwise it will be sheer weakness. The stronger must always be resisted. Towards the weaker, one must not use his strength ; one must withhold it, practise non-resistance in that case. In both cases, it is the manifestation of strength—to resist the stronger and not to resist the weaker. The practice now obtaining is in the reverse order, not resisting the stronger and resisting the weaker. It is the manifestation of weakness both ways. Strength is what is wanted, what should be infused into the people. "Na balahinena labhyah" not attained by the weak. Biblical religion which says: "If you are smitten on the right cheek, show the left also," is what is being practised in the land of Gita-religion. In the West, Gita religion is practised. America practices it. I am also practising it, and not the biblical religion which has become the fashion here. It ill-becomes religion. What do our Gods have in their hands -- Shiva, Mothet Kali and others? What did Sri Ramachandra have in His hands? What did He do? Did He show his left cheek when he was smitten on the right? What did Sri Krishna teach Arjuna when the latter refused to fight? Coming to our own times, Sri Gurumaharaj -- a brahmin of brahmins -- was once passing through a place infested with dacoits, in a

Non-resistance.

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country cart. At the distant sight of a person appearing, the cartman and the others got out of the cart and fled. What did Sri Gurumaharaj do? Did he also flee? No! He stuck to his place, and on the approach of the dacoit, shouted 'Sri Kaliki Jai' and rushed out of the cart. The dacoit had to flee at that. It was not that Sri Gurumaharaj was physically stronger than the dacoit and could beat him in a fight, if it came to that, but he manifested spiritual strength. What would have happened otherwise, if he had followed the example of the others and taken to his heels. Do you see the effect of the manifestation of strength? Every one must try to manifest the inner strength and not helplessly submit. 'Fear not' 'Ma bhaih', should be our motto. Fear is weakness, a sin. Fearlessness is strength, a virtue, which should be acquired.

Manifest Strength.

Non-injury, again, is a misunderstood virtue. People exhibit great scruples in killing flies, mosquitos and such like disease-carriers, but have no scruple in fleecing fellow-beings by taking exhorbitant rates of interest and in other ways. We do not show sympathy where it ought to be, but exhibit it where it ought not to be.

(*Extracts from the notes of Sri Annapurna Devi, Sewan.*)

Q. I have heard that we should not give up Japa with beads but that it should be practised daily.

S. We know that we have to give up the mala (rosary). But we should not give up Japa by the mind.

Q. How should we call upon God?

S. We should take up one bhava and call on him in that bhava. The bhava may be Dasya, Vatsalya or Madhura or any other. But we must necessarily take up one.

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Q. Is there any harm if, when taking up one bhava, others intrude?

S. There is no harm. Havn't you heard this?

"Oh Lord; Thou art my everything, Mother, father, house, relations and all."

Q. The unmarried woman may take up the Madhura bhava. But will it not be wrong for a married woman to do so?

S. Not at all. The Lord is the husband of the soul.

Q. If we cannot do Puja, what should we practise?

S. Japa.

Q. If Japa also cannot be practised?

S. Meditate. Those who cannot meditate should do Japa. Those who cannot do Japa should do Puja. Japa is greater than Puja and meditation greater than Japa. Keep your mind under your control. Why should you be under the control of your mind?

Even the unattached should behave as if they are greatly attached. People should not be made to know that you are dettached. Ramaprasad says: "Oh, mind! you should see, and I should see, but no one else."

Q. Many are born to pass away immediately after birth. Why are they born at all?

S. The gardener takes very great care of the plants and trees which have blossomed and began to bear fruits and thinks within himself that he will take the fruits to his master as they ripen. One day the master comes to the garden and plucks the unripe fruits. The gardener says to himself: "He has plucked the unripe fruits. Well, the trees are his, it is his will and pleasure."

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(*Notes taken by Swami Srikandhananda.*)

Place :—Trivandrum. Dated—Dec. 1926

Q. Is there any provisions for householders in the Ramakrishna Mission ?

S. We give them spiritual instructions.

Q. What I meant was, organised form of ceremonials to be followed by householders.

S. No, they are social matters. The Christian Missions, the Arya Samaj, and the Brahmo Samaj lay special emphasis upon rituals, because they are social bodies. Ours is purely a religious organisation. Their aim is social reform and they adjust religion to suit their purpose. Ours is purely religious. We give society perfect freedom to frame its own laws. The rules of society vary according to time, place and circumstances. But spiritual laws are eternal.

Q. Sri Gurumaharaj is said to have seen Christ. But the vision which Swami Vivekananda had near the island of Crete tends to negative the historicity of Christ. How can we reconcile the two ?

S. These do not contradict each other. Swamiji never disputed the personality of a great soul who came to be known as Christ. Bhagavan had the vision of that great soul. Bhagavan does not say about his historicity. Nobody doubts that there was such a great personality. The doubt is about such details as the date and place of his birth etc. Even among the Christians, there is difference of opinion about these. Nobody knows whether Christ was born in Bethelhem or in the Himalayas.

Q. Are there interpolations in the Christian gospel.

S. There is a good lot of them. The various Bibles do not agree with one another. The Greek, Latin and English Bibles differ greatly one from the

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other. Christ was speaking the Jewish or Hebrew language and not Greek. When the Greek Bible was written, the writers added many things of their own. Then, to suit their several purposes, each different sect added something of its own or altered something as it liked. So, the Christians themselves are not agreed as to their tenets. How, then, can we know what the original ones were. The Christians are first to be asked to settle that question. The idea of the Trinity was not there till the time of Peter. The Catholics place Mary even above Jesus. The departed soul first goes to Christ, then to the Mother Mary and lastly to the Father.

Q. Is there any word corresponding to 'heathen' in the Hindu Religion?

S. No. By the word 'heathen' the Christians meant one who worshipped any but the true God. According to the Hindu religion there is only one God who is Omnipresent and Omniscient. Even those who worship Bhutas and Pretas are not heathens because they ignorantly worship the same God. Hinduism is the only religion which teaches that God is not extra cosmic, but immanent. Christianity, Muhommedanism, Judaism, all teach that God rules the world sitting in a place they call heaven. They do not believe that God resides in all. Moreover, they believe that the lower animals and plants etc., have no souls. God created man from the dust of the earth and He breathed into man's nostrils, thus producing the soul. Since he did not breathe into the nostrils of the lower animals, they do not possess the soul. Besides, they are Dehatmavadins (those who believe in the body as self). They believe in the resurrection of Jesus as well as of the other created beings. They also believe that man will go to God with the same body which he had while on earth. All those who do not subscribe to these ideas are considered heathens, devil-worshippers.

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(Notes taken by V. Raman Nambudiripad.)

Place :—Ottapalam.

Q. Where is real happiness.

S. In knowledge, renunciation and selfless service. Very few fortunate people know this truth. The others run after wordly pleasures. The man of discrimination is not deluded by the senses. He knows that they produce misery. When union is the cause of pleasure, separation must cause pain. It is an immutable, natural law. It must therefore be clear that not sense enjoyment but renunciation and knowledge are the goal of man.

Q. Does it mean that all objects are to be renounced. Is it possible for the ordinary man to do so.

S. That is not it. We have to accept many things in life. But we must never forget that they are our means and not our goal. The ideal must be kept high and we must build on very sure foundations, otherwise we shall have to go down instead of going up.

Q. How to attain the ideal ?

S. To work alone you have the right. Keep this in mind. The first step towards the goal is Nishkama Karma. It is not Karma that really binds man. But the attachment to its results. Never make the mistake of thinking that Karma as such is productive of bondage and that we can renounce it. 'None remains inactive even for a moment.' We may appear inactive externally. But internally we shall be working without a moment's rest. That sort of tyaga is nothing. It will lead us to the hell of evil thoughts. That was why Bhagavan openly denounced it in the words "Karmendriyani Samyamya etc."

Q. What is the next step.

S. When the mind becomes pure Sadhana becomes easy. Then we must practise concentration.

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Is it easy to control the mind ? It is the most elusive thing in the world. In the initial stages it will wander away from its goal. But never despair. Struggle again and again to lead it back to the goal. "Yato yato nischarati etc," says the Gita. There is nothing which man cannot accomplish by incessant practice. But steady, constant practice is impossible without Vairagya.

Q. It is Brahman that is to be meditated upon and realised. But that is devoid of form or qualities. How then can it be meditated upon ?

S. There-in is the necessity of Bhakti most clearly seen. Men with body-idea cannot meditate on the Nirguna. Their path is to surrender everything at the lotus feet of the All-merciful and Blissful Lord who incarnates from time to time for our sake, to meditate upon His divine form, to love Him and be merged in Him.

Q. What is Bhakti ?

S There is Sadhya-bhakti (bhakti as the end in itself) and there is Sadhana Bhakti (Bhakti as the means). Sadhya Bhakti is the never-ceasing, continuous flow of all the activities of the mind towards the Lord, the Beloved, the repository of all Blessed qualities, the All-merciful Father and Mother of the Universe, the very Soul of our souls. It is pure unconditioned love, Paranuraktih, supreme attachment to God. That transcendental love is got through Sadhana Bhakti which has several steps. The first is Sravana—hearing about God. The second is Keertana -- singing His praises, reading sacred books, speaking of the glories etc. The next is Smarana, constant remembrance. That is, in fact, the most important, because that alone leads to Para Bhakti which may be said to be the highest pinnacle of Jnana ?

Q. Is it possible to see God by the sense organs.

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S. Yes. In Bhakti it is the mental form that is seen outside. When the form is always before the mind, when the mind is centred upon that alone, there is no distinction of inside and outside.

Q. May not the guru's grace alone give realisation to the Sadhaka?

S. Yes, but it is very rare. Ordinarily, Sadhana is very necessary.

Q. In spite of struggles, the mind refuses to be controlled. What should I do?

S. (Pointing to his own heart with great feeling) Fully believe in me.

Q. How can Mahapurushas be recognised?

S. There is no external sign, yet it is easy to recognise them by a test. In the presence of a Mahapurusha we feel an elevation in ourselves. Noble and holy thoughts arise in the mind when we are near them. I still remember the days we used to go to Bhagavan. We were simple students then. But approaching Bhagavan was like entering a higher world.

(*Extracts from the notes of a disciple.*)

Place :—Ponnampet. Date—7th June 1927.

Swamiji has gone to open the Ashrama at Ponnampet.

Q. What is meant by meditation on the Impersonal or Nirakara aspect of God?

A. To think of God as a human being or any other body or as Jyotischakra is Sakara meditation. To think of Him as infinite love, infinite justice etc., and to think of these abstract qualities on an infinite scale is Nirakara meditation.

Q. Is not God both good and bad?

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A. Yes. But the Sadhaka is in the visishta condition, though God is really Avisishta. Hence the Sadhaka has to meditate upon the good aspect of Iswara so that he may become good, and then, he rises above both good and bad.

In the evening Swamiji spoke to Mr. Kalamaiah about the work of the Mission in Coorg. "Now, by the grace of Sri Gurumaharaj", said Swamiji, "there is this Ashrama in Coorg. This can be the chief Ashrama and other smaller ones must be started here and there in various parts of the District. Thus, the ideas of Sri Gurumaharaj must be spread. In course of time every house must become a temple of Guru Maharaj. I see it is going to take place in the future. We have to think of the future generation. These present day movements such as the Brahmosamaj, Aryasamaj etc, will not last long. But this will, because the Divine power of Sri Gurumaharaj is at its back.

Date—9th June 1927.

Q. Swamiji, sometimes we find it easy to concentrate the mind on one figure and sometimes on another. Is it good to let the mind so to fix itself upon different figures?

A. No! Haven't you heard "one thing at a time." Having taken up a figure and realised that you may take up another, but not before you have realised it. Don't you know how Sri Gurumaharaj practised? He took up one Sadhana, realised the ideal, and then took up another. A student should finish one lesson before taking up another. The mind is naturally unsteady. It does not like to stick to one thing for long. You must not allow it to have its own way.

Q. What are the various forms of Sadhana?

A. Sadhana means to fix the mind on one thing to the exclusion of all others. It means constant effort to concentrate on one particular object in spite of its

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unwillingness to do so. The highest form of it is Rajayoga. Its goal is Samadhi. Flowers, incense etc. are only paraphernalia -- a help. They are useful.

Q. Is Pranayama helpful to concentration ?

A. Yes. It helps concentration. But it does not give Samadhi.

Q. What is tapasya ?

A. Physical tapasya is to make the mind feel happy and not to upset by the surroundings. So, getting accustomed to all kinds of food, sleeping on the floor etc. are all forms of physical tapasya. Mental tapasya is concentration on the ideal, first on the figure, then on the person and lastly on the abstract idea. But in physical tapasya one should not go to extremes. That will cause disease. "Yuktaharaviharasya". To one who is moderate in food etc., Yoga is helpful. Everything must be Parimita (moderate.) The real object of physical tapasya is to get Titiksha as described by Sri Sankara, "Sahanam sarvadukhanam aprateekara poorvakam." Putting up with all sorts of pain without thought of re-acting.

At 11-30 A.M. Swamis S—and D—with Mr. A—and Brahmachari S—came in. Swami S—who had been to Bangalore also returned. After meals at 1-30 P.M., Swamiji asked them :

S. How is your work? Hereafter none will accuse you of idleness, for you are all advertising everything you do with pictures etc., on a grand scale. People who have not seen Sri Gurumaharaj or Swamiji do all this to win the favour of the public. I am nobody in the Mission, nor do I care for it. I am an individual working according to my light.

The present types of Students' Home are not after Swamiji's heart. If I had to compromise with these things I would have committed suicide. I have that strength in me. I am a child of him who said to the

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Madras Social Reformers that he could not be intimidated. You have read of Sri Gurumaharaj's reply to Kristo Das Pal about starting schools, hospitals etc. "Do you think" asked Sri Gurumaharaj "that God is snoring in Heaven after taking His oil bath and meals; who are you to help humanity?" Swamiji started all these activities, not as philanthropic work, but to engage the working element in man for a good cause. Now-a-days you deliver big lectures and publish long reports in all the papers. The pot that is not filled makes a noise and the bee hums until it has tasted honey. This is the word of Sri Gurumaharaj. Opening Dispensaries, Students' Homes, coaching students for examinations and advertising, all these are not real work.

Now-a-days, no function is complete without a lecture. A Swami will be considered great if he can deliver lectures. If he doesn't lecture, why, he is simply useless! When the Holy Mother visited Madras, some young men went to Swami Ramakrishnananda and said to him: "We heard that Mrs. Ramakrishna has come and is staying here. When is she going to deliver her address?" Sashi Maharaj asked them to clear away. This is the fashion of the day. I am not a lecturer nor do I care for it.

I am now 64 years old. Forty-four years I have spent as a Sanyasin. Till now I have lived according to my principles. I cannot compromise and follow the ways of others.

When I first came to Bangalore, there was only that building, no funds, no cook, not even a servant to clean the utensils. Since Sashi Maharaj used to hold classes here and there I, too, had to do so. I would return from the classes at 9 P.M., and then cook my food. Thus I lived, sometimes even starving. Then Mr. Narayana Iyengar gave Rs. thirty per month. After some time he raised it to Rs. forty. I used to go to the market to collect subscriptions in kind and in

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coins. After much knocking about I collected Rs. six thousand and deposited the amount in the Bank as a permanent fund. Then I got a cook from the north. He lived with me for six years. Thus the Ashrama slowly developed into its present condition. Is it all a joke? So long as President Maharaj was there, I had some interest in Bangalore. The day he passed away, I lost all interest in everything.

And what a land is this? Sashi Maharaj wept that, working so long, he could not get a single man of renunciation. So one has to coach up students and do all sorts of things to get one's food!

Coorg is a good place. Here, you have no rigid caste system as in Kerala. There, they have endless divisions and sub-divisions. Unless they are done away with, the people will not prosper.

After the Coorg dance was over, Swamiji said to S—

If we are to show anything it is that we are the children of Sri Gurumaharaj. You hunt after lectures—after wordly people. Even Swamiji did not deliver lectures here except in reply to addresses presented to him. What did President Maharaj do and what did Swami Thuriyananda do? Did they lecture? Did they dance on the platform? It is life and character that is wanted. Better commit suicide than sell oneself. Have you seen me praising any man, standing before him. I have faith in Gurumaharaj. If I retain a spark of what I got from Gurumaharaj, people will come and bow down before it. Where do you see a man of Sadhananishtha like Swami Turiyananda in the present generation? This generation wants to captivate the world. It wants dynamic activity, dynamic religion. It is so much of degeneration that I see. They all talk very much of activities. I travelled over and visited all the Ashramas Advertisement and shop-keeping, that is what I saw. Have faith in Gurumaharaj. An ounce of faith will work wonders. You work for money, name and fame. You think that will stabilise

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your work ? Poor souls ! No faith in Gurumaharaj ! Where angels fear to tread, fools rush in. Spirituality is nothing to you. You have crammed something -- you have borrowed something from Swamiji. What Swamiji gave in plain language you put into combrous language and with it you dance on the platforms. Pray to Sri Gurumaharaj to reveal to you what he came to preach. You have read His parable of the lotus and the bee, you have expatiated upon it and yet you want dynamic activities. You think you have got ideas directly from Sri Gurumaharaj or Swamiji ! Be like President Maharaj or Swami Turiyananda.

After Pratishtha and Puja (in the Ashrama at Ponnampet) Swamiji came to the shed and said :

This is a virgin soil. People have very little religion, practically. Hereafter all villages will have something like an Ashrama or Bhajana Sangha in Coorg. Sri Gurumaharaj is for the high and the low, the rich and the poor, alike. He will be worshipped by the orthodox as well as by the heterodox. His work is like Satamooli (a plant). Once it comes, it spreads. Till now, only the Brahmins had anything of religion. It is now only that all people have begun to read Ezuthachan. (The Poet Saint of Kerala.) Now the lower classes also get religion. That is why the orthodox Brahmins are opposed to the Mission, not the Nambudiris (Malabar Brahmins) who are indifferent to everything. At Ottapalam we have made a Randhram (breach) in the Nambudiri Fort. x x x A good deal of visits may be required here. It is not by lectures but by personal talks that ideas spread and people instructed and influenced. Don't you see, in the Life of Gurumaharaj (M's gospel) how he visited various persons. Even Swamiji could influence people only by personal contact and not by lectures. People who hear lectures may praise the lecturer and go away. Meeting persons and giving them ideas personally, is the method of work in India.

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After 9 P.M, that day Swamiji said to Mr. Kalamaiah :

" Perhaps your M. L. Cs. and others and yourself also are offended at my not having thanked you. Would you or they have been, in any way benefited by my thankiag you.

K. They are to thank Swamiji.

S. No, they must thank Sri Gurumaharaj. It is His grace that has caused this Ashrama to come into existence. Through His grace He has given me some insight which enables me even to smell the places which He likes. Did I not tell you when I first came to Ponnampet. It is without any conscious effort on my part that I sense it. But if I make an effort I may go wrong. It is not for my good that this Ashrama has been built. I may stay here for a day or not. It is not my work either. It is His and so the Ashrama will go on. He is, by His grace, present here. I have no clinging or attachment to these things. It is He who works and none can resist Him. As you have done this, you are responsible to the committee. But if it were done in the name of the Mission, to whom are the accounts to be shown ?

At Ottapalam or Haripad or Trivandrum, we have no accounts. So when the committee asked me for accounts and reports to be sent to Belur, I said, " I am here." If they wanted, they could come and see for themselves. When they asked me how many centres I have started, I gave them their names. I will do Gurumaharaj's work in my own way. I have no policy or diplomacy. Where there is Ghrina, Lajja and Bhayam (sentimentality, sense of shame and fear), there yau cannot become perfect. Why should you be a coward. It is not the committee that has sent me to the south. I am not responsibe to it. It was the late President Maharaj who sent me here. The late President Maharaj is Sri Gurumaharaj's son. We are also His sons.

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But he was *the* son. The father and the son are one and the same. So President Maharaj's command is the command of Sri Gurumaharaj.

Date—12th June 1927.

The party left for Tellicherry. Mr Gopala Menon and his boys were awaiting the party on the road. They led us to their house. Just then Mr. Kannan Nambiar came.

K. N. I was in such a hurry that I forgot to take my second cloth which is usually worn in these parts.

S. If a Brahmin is known in a place he will be recognised and respected even if he has no holy thread. So says a Bengali proverb.

K. N. It is very difficult to travel in N. India without a holy thread.

S. You, Nairs, can introduce the holy thread and Vedic rites. Why don't you do so?

K. N. The Arya Samajists do so.

S. They do it for social reform. I recommend it for a religious purpose. You should not thereby cease to be Nairs. As Nairs you must put on the thread and perform Sandhya Vandanam etc.

In the evening the children were singing Rama Nama and Keertanas. Swamiji remarked "That is good. That will purify the home. But now you have substituted harmonium and dramatic songs. That shows degeneration. But I don't say that music should not be cultivated as an art. But to do away with Namakeerthana is very bad."

Place:—Tellicherry. Date—13th June 1927.

In the morning, after breakfast, Mr. Nambiar requested Swamiji to teach him Vedanta Sutras.

S. I am the disciple of Him who did not know how to put two words together, that illiterate man.

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How can I teach? x x x 'Chamchalam hi manah Krishna etc.' The mind, Oh Krishna! is highly restless. Even Brahma, Vishnu and all the Devas cannot control it. Is it not so?

K.N. The Mantravadis do tatkālasānti (temporary relief) to a person possessed by an evil spirit. So also there is tatkālasānti by seeing persons like you. But afterwards it again becomes restless.

S. The Lord's name is the Mantravada. But the mind does not stick to it.

K. N. Yet it has a power in it.

S. Chaitanya has said: "Nāmānyakari Bahudhā etc." Oh Lord, you have created Names by thousands and deposited all your might in every one of them and you have left us free to take any one of them at any time. Such is your unbounded mercy. Yet, Oh, Lord! Such is my misfortune that I feel no love for any one of them at any time.

K. N. If Chaitanya says that he has no Bhakti, what is the hope for us?

S. Not that, he had Bhakti, but he was not satisfied with what he had. Bhaktas are never content with their Bhakti. The Puranas say that Shiva, the ecstatic God was dancing quite unmindful of the world. At the end of the Nritya he beat the Dhacca (drum) fourteen times. Out of that sound came the Varnamala (the sounds of the alphabet). So each letter is impregnated with an idea. Sound vibration has its counter-part in thought. The sound materialises into word. Whatever the name may be, there is Shakti in it. Don't think otherwise. So by repeating that, you are making your mind a repository of energy for battling with Avidya. All animal nature comes and says I will occupy the mind. But the Lord's name drives it away. What you call good is one form, and bad is

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another form. But that out of which good and bad are manufactured is a different thing. We lack in energy. We give up the struggle lightly. We should not mind the failure, but continue the struggle.

K. N. Bad thoughts materialised give trouble.

S. That is a Christian idea. Let the good and the bad fight against each other. After a time they will get exhausted and cease fighting. Let Vidya and Avidya fight. I am their witness, Atmarama. Let the object and object fight, let the subject not identify with their works. That is the way.

At 10-30 A.M. Mr. Nambiar wished to take Swamiji to his house for Bhiksha. Swamiji quoted a Sansktit sloka and explained its meaning that any one can be won over by giving food; even a Mridanga produces Madhuradhwani (sweet sound) when well fed. He also quoted a humorous Sadhu's saying that a Sadhu's month is like a letter box. You put letters for various places in the same box. They all reach their respective destinations, producing the desired result. (At 11 A.M. Mr. Nambiar's house was reached.)

K. N. I have no will power. What shall I do?

S. The great Nanak says 'Nama Smara Nama Smara'. (Remember the Lord's name).

Swamiji rested for a while after meals.

Swami A.—Even after attaining Nirvikalpa Samadhi Swami Vivekananda wanted to accept Pavahari Baba as his guru to teach him Hatha Yoga. Why was it? How can we explain it?

S. He was to be the world-teacher. So he was expected to know all the prevalent systems of Yoga. He also went to the magicians to know what their science was. He had to know the social, political and religious needs of the whole world as he was to be the world teacher. Don't you see, Sri Gurumaharaj practised the Muhammedan and other faiths after he had

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attained Nirvikalpa Samadhi. The goal is one, the paths are different; he wanted to test and be familiar with them all. Similarly Swamiji wanted to practise Hatha Yoga.

Swami A.—Swami Vivekananda has given Karma Yoga lectures as a series, Bhakti Yoga and Raja Yoga also are given in a systematised form. His Jnana Yoga lectures are stray ones. Why was it? What is the practical side of Jnana Yoga.

S. The practical side is given in his lectures on Practical Vedanta.

Swamiji's method was new. Vedanta was in the Upanishads. In the Vedanta Sutras they were systematised in one way. Sankaracharya systematised it in another way as found in Viveka Chudamani, Atmabodha etc. Swamiji presented it in a way appealing to the modern mind, explaining it with reference to psychology, science and meta-physics. Of all these Acharyas, Vyasa alone had his own Sutras. The others based their ideas on some passages of the Upanishads. Patanjali's Sutras are based upon some passages in the Swetaswatara Upanishad. The Samkhya Sutras seem to be the oldest. Sri Ramakrishna did one half and Swamiji did the other half. We are simply doing Charvita-charvana.(Masticating the already masticated.) Sri Ramakrishna came to appeal to all. That is why he was not learned in the scriptures. He gave a death-blow to the highest authority attributed to the Sastras. Though Sankara had said 'Sabda Jalam Maharanyam' (conglomeration of sounds, dense forest). Sri Ramakrishna alone boldly proclaimed that the Shastras were catalogues or lists of things. Sankara had to compromise, with the orthodox view. The times perhaps demanded it. But Sri Ramakrishna boldly said that the Vedas themselves are only the words of inspired men. That is why Swamiji said that Vedas meant not books, but inspiration. This idea was not new. There is the old text " Aptavakyam Srutih ". (The words of

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the inspired ones are Veda.) But orthodoxy later on proclaimed the Vedas themselves as God. Sri Ramakrishna taught the masses in simple language. The same ideas were taught by Swamiji in the language of the intellegentia of the world. Swamiji and Bhagavan put new life into everything. Swamiji's Karmayoga is not the Karmayoga of the old Purva Meemamsa. He explained Karma in a light which readily appeals to the educated people whose nature tended to philanthropic activities. Bhagavan taught the faithful, simple majority. The whole gist of Jnana Yoga is 'give up 'I' and 'mine'—the product of Avidya, and then you will be one with Brahman.' It is to explain the method to so give up that Sankara explained the Koshas, Sareeras (sheaths, bodies) etc. Swamiji followed an original method. He did not simply translate or edit the old texts as Maxmuller and others did. So also did Bhagavan. Now you do not understand Bhagavan or Swamiji. After hundreds of years every word of theirs will be quoted as authority. Already Bhagavan's words have become so. Formerly they tried to show that Bhagavan got His ideas from the Brahmos or so. Now they have given up the attempt. Instead, they now attack Swamiji saying that this is Swamiji's own idea. As time goes on they will accept his words as authoritative as the words of Krishna and Vyasa. Not only that, they will accept the words of all His disciples. Don't you see people saying with regard to the commentaries that Anandagiri's is more authoritative than Vachaspati's because Vachaspati was only a householder and did not belong to the order of Sankara.

In the evening Mr. Nambiar and a few students came.

A boy :—The other day I had a discussion with a friend who said that Swami Vivekananda was not a true Yogi, because he did preaching work. Is it true ?

S. What did he preach ?

Boy. He preached religion, about God.

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S. How can one who has not trodden the path leading to God preach it to others. Only a Yogi can do that. He alone can boldly say, "Here I have found the path, I have solved the problem."

B. Can a perfect man preach religion?

S. A perfect man is no more a man.

Boy. Cannot a perfect man exist in this world?

S. Can the whole ocean be put into a chempu (small vessel)? There may be a silent man of realisation. That does not make him superior to all others. Will not people begin to laugh at me if I preach something which I do not know. Did people laugh when Vivekananda preached? That shows that he had acquired what a Yogi could acquire. If you give a large quantity of food to two beggars and if one of them bundles up the surplus while the other distributes his to others, whom will you consider as a better man? In the Vedas you will find the words, "Srinvantu Viswe Amritasya Putra etc." (Hear, ye sons of immortality! xxx I have found the way etc.) This shows that even in those days they preached after realising the truth. I have very little respect for those Yogis who do not share their knowledge with others.

K. N. Their point is, why Trailinga Swami did not preach as Swami Vivekananda did?

S. Why! even in his Mauna period he preached. Once there was a naughty problem which the Pandits in Benares had to solve. They could not solve it themselves. They approached Trailinga Swami who was in Maunam then. He ordered a slate and pencil to be brought and gave them a written reply. I saw him while I was a little boy. Who told you that he did not preach? He would look at us and smile and smile. There was no policy or diplomacy in him. I have not seen him immersed in Samadhi. I was born in Bengal, but brought up in Benares. I was 10 or 11 years old then.

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K. N. What about Pavahari Baba ?

S. Pavahari Baba would be in his room. But he would give instructions sitting inside, shutting the door and speaking to hundreds of people. He would go out only for a bath and that too very early in the morning. He never used to come out of his den, nor did he ever keep quiet.

K. N. Has Swamiji seen any extraodinary man in the Himalayas ?

S. No. Extraordinary was Trailingaswami. He was quite indifferent about food. Some people would worship him. If people placed money before him he would play with it and go away leaving it there. He was just like a child. Sometimes he would call some curd-woman and begin to sell curd. For half anna, one anna, four annas and one rupee, he would give the same quantity and finally leave it all and walk away. If anybody put rice into his mouth he would eat. He would not ask the man's caste. If he had no hunger he would not open his mouth. Once, a Raja put a shawl over him. He would not say I am a Tyagi. He wore it and seemed pleased with it. But when it dropped, he did not even look at it. That was the man, extraordinary ! Pavahari Baba was of another type. His brother used to carry him food. He did not cook for himself. I have not seen his figure as he never came out. He would talk from inside. He was a Vaishnava Sadhaka, initiated by a Vaishnava Sadhu from South India.

Q. What about the Yogi in Pondicherry.

S. A political Yogi, perhaps. Let him come out and then you will know.

Q. He has written a commentary on the Gita. Why ? What was the necessity for one after Sankara's commentary ?

S. That is the work of a learned man. Tilak has written one. Necessity for a commentary, there is,

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in order to supply the requirements of the changing times. It may be asked, why did Krishna come after Rama? Why do we want motor cars when there are 'Ottakala vandis' (country carts driven by a single bullock). In Sankara's time science had not made much advance. The modern scientific mind wants something more than Sankara's words.

Q. If I am satisfied with Sankara?

S. You are a man of the primitive age. There is a law of demand and supply. Time, place, circumstances, are all changing. Sri Gurumaharaj used to say that a mother does not give the same diet to her baby as to her grown up son. The same mental food will not suit all minds.

Q. Krishna preached the Gita to express an idea and Sankara has explained the meaning. When the real meaning has been explained, why another explanation?

S. Sankara's meaning applied to men of his age who had one angle of vision.

Q. But the text is the same.

S. The text points to an object. The object may be viewed from different angles, from 10°, 20° and so on. Sankara had one angle of vision. The same Brahman is seen from various angles of vision. Our angle of vision has been broadened. Sankara's instrument may not hold good in this age. So a new instrument is necessary to view the object which is the text. Formerly you were looking out through a window in the wall. That window has been enlarged into a verandah. The same object is viewed from a greater angle. All points to the same absolute Brahman. A man has five children. They all think of their father. But the conception of each one will be different from that of the other. The father is the same. The spiritual vision is being gradually broadened.

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Q. Why has God created the rich and the poor ?

S. My parents have 10 children. One is an idiot, another intelligent. Who is responsible for the difference ? Do you think that the parents hate the idiotic child and love only the intelligent ones. The parents have no partiality.

Q. Why could He not have made all good ?

S. Without bad there is no good. If one thing alone exists there is no creation. I shall put another question. Why should there be such different things as stones, trees etc ? It is difference that makes knowledge possible. Knowledge is comparison. To have a knowledge of light we must have knowledge of darkness. So creation has inequality inherent in it. Then the question is why God created at all. The Shastras say God alone exists, nothing else. I alone exist. I have multiplied myself.

Q. So all are God ?

S. Certainly. But all are not the whole of God. A pie and a rupee are both money. But each has its own value.

Q. Why should then one try to realise God ?

S. If a cowry (cash) wants to have the value of a rupee why should it not attempt it ? The cowry has not the rupee value. If it is satisfied with its own value, it need not struggle. But if it wants to have a higher value it must struggle.

Q. But, are not all one ?

S. All are one in quality (all are money) but different in degree (value).

Q. Has God parts ?

S. So long as there is creation God may be said to have parts.

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Q. How does Swamiji reconcile predestination and free will?

S. Predestination is a Christian idea. We do not believe in it.

Q. Is Predestination and Karma the same?

S. No. Predestination is something happening without a cause, not being subject to any law. Karma is the law of cause and effect.

Q. Can our will modify the effect of Karma?

S. Certainly, if I can make, I can unmake also.

Q. What is pre-ordination?

S. The same as predestination.

Q. What is Prarabdha and Sanchita? Can we shorten or lengthen our lives by Karma?

S. What is stored up is Sanchita. From your very birth you are storing up. That portion of Sanchita which has begun to be worked out is Prarabdha. What is to be worked out in future is Agamika. Storing up is my own work. Working out is also my own work? You can lengthen or shorten your life as some Yogins do.

Q. Does the effect come naturally from the cause or is there a supernatural agent behind it?

S. Cause produces its effect naturally.

Q. How can Karma which has no intelligence produce a result?

S. The lamp burns and darkness vanishes.

Q. How to free onself from Karma?

S. Karma is due to Avidya and association with body. Give up that and you will be free through Vidya. "Jnanagnih Sarva Karmani Bhasmasat Kuruterjuna". The fire of knowledge reduces all Karma to ashes.

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Place :—The Ashrama, Ottapalam.

Date—16th June 1927.

Mr. N.—A teacher in the local High School has brought Swamiji a letter from the Headmaster requesting him to prescribe a syllabus for teaching religion to the students of the school.

S. We have no syllabus. Religion is realisation. It is life that is important. It cannot be taught by reading from some books and explaining the meaning. In our Students' Home we teach the Vedas to the Brahmins and Stotras to the Non-Brahmins. We engage Pandits to teach the Vedas in order that the Swarapatha may not be lost. They do not know the meaning. So the Swamis who reside with the students teach them the meaning. The Upanishads and the Gita are also taught. They live and teach. They teach more by their lives. What is teaching without the life? A householder working for a salary and ready to go away whenever a higher salary is offered, to teach religion! And that, too in half an hour, and in the midst of many other subjects! In the Students' Home the Swamis and the students live together. So they have ample time. Both the teacher and the taught must be Swasthachittas (with minds composed and at ease) and teaching must be in the early morning hours. If the teacher himself does not know religion what can he teach? There is a story. A student in an old village school was very fond of jaggery. He bothered his mother daily to give him jaggery or cash to buy it with. If he was not given something he would commit havoc in the house. The mother was sorely troubled and requested the teacher to cane the boy. The teacher promised to do the needful after a week. The teacher himself was a jaggery eater. What he did was to stop the habit himself at once. After a week, he dealt with the boy properly. The boy also stopped the habit.

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It is not science or mathematics that you want to teach, but religion. It must be taught from life. We are not teaching this ism or that ism, and we are not preaching social equality. Our Mission teaches the old Varnashrama Dharma. That does not mean your orthodoxy. We believe in division of labour which helps to keep the society in a healthy condition. Gandhiji, the Aryasamajists and others may want social equality for all. That is making a mess of the whole thing; a washerman, a weaver and a barber combined in one! They talk of the elevation of the depressed classes. In fact it is only a pulling down of the upper classes! That brings opposition from the latter. We don't do that. We believe in Chaturvarnayam (the fourfold division according to Guna and Karma) and also in samadarsitwa (spiritual equality). Our work was not started by poor mortals like your political leaders. Don't you see how movements originated by Divine Agencies, Rama, Krishna, Christ and others live on.

We are not missionaries to prescribe text books for the several classes. We believe in individual instruction. A fourth form boy may sometimes understand religion better than a sixth form boy. There can be no general rule for all in the matter of religion. Do you think that the boy who writes a good essay on Ahimsa knows more of religion than a boy who cannot write so well. Religion cannot be popularised by prize essays. Don't you see the children coming here morning and evening? They do pranamas to God and to the Sadhus and do Japa, Bhajana etc. That is religion. Can you make such arrangements in your school? That will be real religious instruction. If you want to teach from books there is the 'Sanatana Dharma' written by Theosophists. There is no Theosophy in it, only ideas borrowed from Hindu Books.

When Mr. N—returned to the Ashrama next day Swamiji told him that the first step in religion was sincerity.

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Thulasi Sugandham (Fragrance of the Basil).

Niranjan Ashrama. Date—June 1930.

(Impressions and conversations recorded by a disciple, an erudite Nambudiri Brahmin gentleman, Sri Ottur Subramanyan Nambudiripad. He had heard of Swamiji from a Nambudiri friend of his who was already Swamiji's disciple and had yearned to meet him. Hearing from his friend that Swamiji had reached Ottapalam, he went to the Ashrama with the friend and a few other Bhaktas. From the courtyard of the Ashrama he heard Swamiji's voice. The very first words he heard were: "Remove that word 'Govern'. I don't like it. We are serving the world, not governing it. Governing implies egoism". Swamiji was going through a report drawn up by the inmates of the Ashrama. The visitors approached Swamiji and made Sashtanga Pranamas. Swamiji received them cordially and enquired of the disciple whether the new comers were students. 'No' answered disciple. The Swamiji ordered mats to be spread for the visitors to sit and asked them to be seated. All the new comers took their seats. The disciple kept standing. 'He cannot take his seat here' said Swamiji smiling and then insisted on the disciple also taking his seat. Addressing the disciple Swamiji asked "Have any of them any questions to ask". The Nambudiri gentleman began.)

Q. How is Japa to be done?

A. With knowledge of its meaning and Bhakti, not like a gramophone.

Q. But the Puranas say that Ajamila and others got mukti by uttering the Lord's name even without knowledge or love.

A. That is to be considered as Arthavada (merely laudatory) intended to create interest.

Q. Have not God's names more power than ordinary words?

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A. God's name has infinite power. But what of that? Who knows its value? Give a rupee into the hands of a baby. To the baby ignorant of its value, it is a mere hard thing, a stone. But to the grown up man, it is a thing of value with which to buy enjoyable things. Similarly to the knowing man alone God's name is of great value and power and utility.

Q. What is to be thought of during Japa?

A. The Lord's form which is the meaning of the name.

Q. Is it possible for all to think of the Lord's real form?

A. Every one can think of a form according to his mental capacity. A child of two years calls its father "father, father." Its twenty year old brother also calls him father, father. Does the child know anything about the greatness of the father as its brother does? Yet does not the father respond to the child's call as readily and lovingly as to its brother's? Or does the father think, 'O, this child! What does it know about me and my position?' And does he therefore keep quiet? If he but knows that the child calls him and wants him, he hastens to the child. Children are taken to temple and made to worship. Do they know anything about God? By repetition and in course of time they begin to understand something about the glories of God. When a child is made to learn the alphabet, does it know what it means and what it is for. By degrees, as it progresses, it begins to know the why and the wherefore of it. Suppose your name is Subramanian.* On hearing the name Subramanian, your father, brother, uncle, all have distinct and separate notions and feelings regarding the same individual, Subramanian. The one thinks of you as a son, the other as a brother, the third as a nephew. Yet all of them have you in mind. Much in the same way, all

* In fact that was his name—Swamiji could never have known it from anybody as this was his very first visit.

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people think of the same God although their conceptions and feelings differ ever so widely.

Q. If repetition of Mantra should be accompanied with contemplation of its meaning, may not one avoid the trouble of making Japa and meditate on the meaning alone?

A. There can be no idea without a corresponding word. Whenever we think of an object, its name arises in the mind. Think of a baniyan tree, as soon as you conceive of the trunk and branches and leaves, the name, banyan tree, also rises in the mind. The connection between thought and word is inseparable. To know this fully you should study the theory of Sphota.

Q. The mind never gets concentrated during Japa. How to curb it?

A. Practice is the means. What wonderful bodily feats some perform? How is it possible? By long and continued practice. Sandow is an example. There are some who can remember a thing heard only once. Haven't you heard of them? Once there was a case of a dispute and assault between two men. The witness was a foreigner who did not know a word of their language, but remembered the words uttered by each of the disputants and he repeated them to the very letter.

Q. How can such retentive power be acquired?

A. Perfect Brahmacharya. But then health is the foundation for all practices.

Q. My health has been very bad. What can I do?

A. What is your trouble? Whatever it be, get it cured.

Q. I have taken a lot of medicines. I have been worshipping the Lord at Guruvayur. *

* A famous Krishna temple where many devotees have got themselves cured of rheumatism and other ailments.

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A. Much medicine is no good. Take good exercise. As a boy I was weak and sickly. By proper physical exercise I became healthy.

Q. I perform Suryanamaskara.

A. The old method does not give proper exercise to all the organs. Practise some of the new methods. Regaining health is not after all an impossibility.

Q. My mind also is uneasy. How can I get peace of mind?

A. Oh! Is it so easy to get as physical health? Peace of mind comes as the result of many years' hard practice.

Q. I want to know the method.

A. I shall speak on it some other time.

So saying Swamiji rose from his seat and entering the garden engaged himself in transplanting a cocoanut tree with his own hands.

The devotees took leave of Swamiji that day and came again the next day at 10 A.M. Swamiji was, then, taking his usual river bath. After his return the devotee informed Swamiji that he wished to have a talk with him in private. "You can have it in the afternoon" said Swamiji.

D. But I am to leave this for Guruvayur by the 12-30 train. I have vowed to worship there every day.

S. How long is it to continue?

D. For three years.

S. Then complete it. It is like the vow of devotees going to Sabarimala. It must be completed.

D. Will Swamiji be here if I come again after two days?

S. You can learn it from the Swamis in the Ashrama.) The devotee took leave falling prostrate

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before Swamiji who blessed him with upraised hands and with the words) may God bless you with health and happiness.

It was after the lapse of nearly two years that the devotee saw the Swamiji again. It was evening on a Tuesday in March 1932. Swamiji was sitting in the portico of the Ashrama. The devotee prostrated himself before Swamiji. Seeing him in that state, Swamiji enquired who that was. On being told that he used to make frequent enquiries of Swamiji's visit, Swamiji asked, "Oh, is it that Guruvayur devotee?". After some time he told Swamiji that he had come to pray for his blessings. " I pray for your health ", said, Swamiji. "It is not health alone that I seek " was all that the gentleman could utter. Swamiji looked at him for a few seconds and said: " I am very busy now. There is Pratishtha in Pudukad Ashrama the day-after to-morrow. That must be over before we can think of anything else. I shall return on Friday. You may come on Saturday evening. I shall then tell you what to do."

Swamiji returned on Saturday evening only. The devotee made pranama. Swamiji asked him to go to him on Monday. The devotee was uncertain as to the meaning of Swamiji's word, for nothing explicit had been said on either side. He then ventured to add " I believe Swamiji knows what I want." "Yes, that is why I asked you to come the day after to-morrow." That day the devotee's younger brother also accompanied him. He was very young. Yet he was desirous of getting initiation from Swamiji. With great misgivings, the devotee represented his desire to Swamiji. " What! your brother? He is so young " said Swamiji. After a few moments' silence Swamiji graciously asked him also to come. On Monday both of them were initiated in the morning. Soon after, both of them wanted to take leave of Swamiji who enquired if they had taken any prasad. The disciple returned in the evening when he asked what sort of life he was to lead and Swamiji said: " lead a

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moral life till you get married." The next day Swamiji asked him whether the disciple's father had known that he had gone to the Ashrama and whether his father had any objections to his visiting the Ashrama.

D. He has not openly expressed disapproval. I do not know how he feels it. They think that I get polluted if I come here. So on my return from, the Ashrama I have either to take a bath or to lie that I have bathed. Which of these two courses should I take ?

S. Neither. In no case should you utter a falsehood. Say boldly that you will not bathe.

D. If I so oppose them, they will be greatly displeased with me.

S. It is not in this tone that you should speak to them. Persuade them gently.

D. It will be quite useless to tell them anything, however reasonable, against the time honoured customs and habits.

S. What custom is this ? Achara is what is approved by the wise. What they despise is Anachara. Your present day customs are Anacharas.

D. Has, then, purity or impurity no meaning ?

S. What is purity ? It is purity of heart which comes of devotion to God. Pouring a bucketful of water on the head never makes for purity. Bodily purity or impurity does not count in the matter of devotion to God. You can think of God in any condition. I suppose you repeat Gayatri. You can do it at all times. Even if you become impure by coming here, what you have to do to regain your purity is, to think of God. The Padma Purana -- a very high authority—says: "Apavitrah Pavitro va sarvavastham gatopi va yah smaret Pundareekaksham sa bahyabhyantarah suchih." Pure or impure, or in whatever condition, whoever thinks of God is bodily and mentally pure.

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D. But quoting authority will be but a cry in the wilderness where notions are firm and deep-rooted.

S. If they do not respect authority, what is their Orthodoxy? Tell them if they have no respect for their authoritative scriptures, you have and that you will be guided by the words of the Shastras only. They may curse you. What of that? If you are not at fault, no curse will have any effect on you. Haven't you heard of Prahlada? His father forbade him to take God's name. Prahlada disobeyed the command. Did he thereby come to grief? How humble he was! What love and reverence he had for his father! If one's aims and actions are faultless, one has nothing to be afraid of. God will ever protect him.

D. I wish to hear what Bhakti is.

S. It is that attachment to God which the worldly minded have towards sense-objects. It is not easily got. When one is thoroughly satisfied with sense pleasures and has no more cravings for them, then one begins to get that Bhakti.

D. May not one desire to have Bhakti and begin to practise it even while craving for sense-enjoyment has not ceased? How can one with desires for sense-pleasures, pray for their fulfilment when one has seen that enjoyments bring on misery?

S. That is a fool's fear. It is cowardice and hypocricy to conceal your heart's desire for enjoyments, and to pray to God for Bhakti. What he should rightly do is to pray for and get the desired enjoyment. Finish with the world and then pray for Bhakti.

D. But enjoyment is never satiated. On the other hand it multiplies desires. "Na jatu Kamah Kamanam Upabhogena Samyate". Desires never get satisfied by enjoyment.

S. That is the case with the non-discriminating. Gluttons will never have Vairagya. But the thoughtful

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and discriminating ones get Vairagya at the close of enjoyment. Hear how you are to discriminate. Suppose you take sweet milk-porridge. At the time of enjoying its sweetness, keep on thinking 'of what is this sweetness? How long will it last? It is simple contact with the tongue! It ceases the moment it leaves the tongue and reaches the gullet. How paltry it is when compared with the Bliss of Brahman! What is more foolish than to discard that eternal bliss and run after this paltry evanescent pleasure?' To discriminate like this even while enjoying, leads to true Vairagya in a very short time. The mind which does not cling to wordly pleasures naturally turns inwards. This inwardness of the mind is itself Bhakti. Some people take Bhakti to be smearing the body with ashes or sandalpaste and visiting temples, making offerings for selfish ends and undergoing vows is Bhakti according to them. Mr.—makes feasts, lights lamps etc., every year at Guruvayur. Is it due to Bhakti? Not at all. It is for worldly prosperity, wealth, health, position, children, name, fame and all that. True Bhakti is love. There is no self-seeking in it. It is not subject to any law, all worldly considerations disappear in it. Sri Krishna went to Vidura as his guest. Vidura forgot himself as soon as he saw Krishna. He forgot to offer Arghya and Padhya. Then he plucked plantains from a bunch and offered them to Bhagavan undressed (without peeling off the skin) and Bhagavan lovingly ate all that. It was only when Vidura's mother asked him why he was offering unpealed plantains to Bhagavan that he remembered himself. That is real Bhakti. It comes as a result of perfect purity, perfect non-attachment to the world. Till that is attained one must go on discriminating between the real and the unreal

D. I am unable to get that Bhakti and Vairagya however much I try for it.

S. You will get both. Go on with Vichara (discrimination), Japa and Dhyana. In course of time you will get it.

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Date—6th September 1933.

Swamiji was seated in the Portico of the Ashrama. An elderly gentleman visitor asked Swamiji :—

B—is A—'s guru. In a dream B—tells A—that his own conduct is not good and that C—will testify to it. A—asksC—and is satisfied that the matter is true. Should A—then give up his guru B—.

S. Was B—also asked about it after A—woke up ? Would it be right to act on C—'s words alone without getting B—'s admission ?

G. What was seen in the dream has turned out to be true to the extent of the corroboration by C—.So the other portion of it must also be true.

S. You see so many things in dreams. That a part has become true does not make the whole true. Imagination causes many a thing to be seen in dream. In any case was B—asked ?

G. No. Suppose B—admits it, should he then be discarded ?

S. What was the fault in the conduct. Without that being made clear, how can one say that B—is to be discarded or not. Was it immorality ?

G. I hesitate to make it plain.

S. If you cannot even say whether it refers to morality, why should you have put the question ?

G. What is immorality ?

S. Don't you, an elderly gentleman, yet know what it is ? You insist on my explaining it to you ? Illegal connection with a woman is immorality. Drunkenness is immorality.

S. That is what is suspected of B—.B—is a Sanyasin. His connection with C—is admitted by C—herself and by B—in the dream. Now should the relationship of guru-sishya between B—and A—be severed.

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S. If the immorality is proved, why hesitate in the matter. To worship an immoral man as guru!

G. The dream itself proves that B—has some Siddhis. Would this one defect then make him altogether worthless?

S. What Siddhi can a man without Suddhi have? Many people believe that jugglery is a sign of spirituality. An immoral man may perform wonderful feats of jugglery. Yet I shall call him a hypocrite and nothing else. Purity is the touchstone of spirituality.

The disciple thought that all weakness of the mind, all its outbursts were included in immorality and happened to ask: 'Is anger immorality?'

No sooner was the question asked than Swamiji flared up and thundered. His face and eyes became very red. Every one present was struck with awe at that sight. In his thundering voice he repeated the question: "Is anger immorality? A fine question, that! Can a more foolish question be asked by any one? A fit of anger is the same as sensuality! Look at the idea of these persons. What all false notions have entered the brains of these people. A sanyasin takes his meals; that is immoral; he sleeps; that again is immoral. A Sanyasin who either eats or sleeps cannot be a Siddha! Yet an immoral man may be a very great Yogi! My goodness! Does anyone in our country know anything about spirituality. And no one will understand even if instructed!" Swamiji went on in this strain for some time. No one ventured to put any question or to utter anything. All were afraid even to remain there.

Date—7th September 1934.

Q. How can one know a guru?

A. You cannot know. If you are able to know, you are greater than the guru.

Q. How then can an aspirant get a guru?

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A. God is the indweller. He knows both the guru and the disciple. He sends the guru to the deserving.

Q. What sort of a person is guru. What are a guru's qualifications?

A. An immoral person is not a guru. Anger, desire to take food and such minor things may be found in a guru. That does not detract from his merits. Ordinary people think of a Siddha-guru as one who never eats a good meal, nor uses a soft bed, nor sleeps. If, further, the man is also a palmist and thought-reader or a fortune teller or an exorcist, why, he is Yogi of Yogis! The real test of a guru is Siddhi, not jugglery.

Q. How far can a guru help a disciple.

A. He can instruct as to what ought or ought not to be done. The work must be done by the sishya himself. If the sishya is not fit, if he has not yearning for realisation, the guru cannot help him much. There is no use engaging a great scholar to instruct a dullard.

Q. If yearning be absent, can it be created?

A. Yearning will come at the proper time.

Q. Can the guru give a lift to the mind of the sishya?

A. No, I have not known such gurus.

D. Cannot God-realisation be had without any effort on the part of the disciple? How else did Girish Chandra Ghosh get it?

A. I do not know that. That was an exceptional phenomenon. I am speaking of the ordinary run of mankind. There may always exist one or two exceptions to every rule. The oil poured on the image at Guruvayur cures some diseases. But in how few cases only! One or two per cent get cured. It is utter folly

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to rely solely on the efforts of the guru for one's own spiritual advancement and at the same time to work heart and soul for one's worldly enjoyment.

Wednesday, 2nd Oct. 1934.

In the morning Swamiji gave initiation to a few persons. A disciple from Pudukad informed Das that Swamiji had known his Ishtam and given him mantra even without asking him what the Ishtam was. Such was the case with another disciple also. In the evening two more disciples came. Seeing them Swamiji said: "You have come! You see I am getting older and older, am about to start for the next world. This world is a Karma Bhumi, one is born here to work out some Karmas. Nishkama Karma produces mental purity, which brings on Jnana. If one dies after attaining Brahmajnana he has not to be born again. He becomes free. The others have to be born again and again. You have heard of Sri Gurumaharaj's parable of the potter and his pots. Cattle tread on some pots, and they are broken. The baked ones are of no more use. The unbaked ones are again moulded and made into pots. So the soul baked in the fire of Jnana is unfit to be used for further creations."

"Fearlessness is the most precious thing to be acquired by man. The knower of Brahman alone is fearless."

Q. The Puranas say that persons who were killed by Rama, Krishna and other Avataras attained Moksha. Is that possible.

A. You think that Avataras can kill others, don't you? I doubt it. God is all love. He has no enemy. He is samesighted. How can he kill another like an ordinary man?

D. God's killing is not like the killing by ordinary people. It is His love for the wicked that prompts Him to kill them.

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S. Kill out of love? That is fine indeed! You kill those whom you love, do you? (Swamiji laughs aloud.) It is not easy, nor is it an ordinary fortune, to meet with death at the hands of Rama or Krishna. It is only the exceptionally fortunate few who experience it.

D. Can we believe that there was a Rakshasa with ten heads? Historians say that such descriptions are allegories or exaggerations.

S. It is the way of the world to treat as exaggeration whatever one has not experienced or understood. Ravana was an ordinary being. He was a Rakshasa with great Yoga Siddhis. Some 200 years ago, would any one have believed in wireless telegraphy etc? To-day they are seen and believed in by all. If we had not seen Sri Ramakrishna we would not have believed in God and in Samadhi. Do you know what an unbelieving athiest the College student of the last century was, in Bengal, having no faith in anything old, being enamoured of everything western. But seeing Him, we could not help believing. We actually saw the highest possibilities of self-control manifest in Ramakrishna. He could dry or wet His tongue at will. We used to put sugar on the tongue. After any length of time it remained quite dry. We could blow it off with our breath; very many terrible experiments we have made. We have put our fingers into His open eyes. They won't wink. There was no pain or sensation. We have put live-coal on His shoulders. He had no sensation.

D. Was it only in Samadhi that His outward consciousness was absent?

S. In any condition, waking, sleeping, dreaming or in the superconscious state, in all these, He could control all bodily actions, even breathing and heart-beats. Doctors were stupefied. Their science could not explain any of those phenomena.

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D. We wish to hear something more about Sri Ramakrishna.

S. You can read the books about Him.

D. We wish to hear from you direct.

S. Oh! That is not capable of being expressed in words. It is to be known by the mind. Only persons who are perfectly pure and highly advanced in Sadhana can rightly understand His life. You read out Kalidasa's poems to a boy. Would he understand anything of its beauty and sentiments?

D. So my case is hopeless.

S. Why should you think so? Pray to Him to give you more of Viveka and Vairagya. Then He will graciously reveal to you His divine glories. There is no Rama where there is Kama. There is no Kama where there is Rama. So first of all, get rid of Kama. "Jahi satrum mahabaho kamarupam durasadam." Oh! mighty armed one! Kill thy terrible foe, kama (desire).

Thursday, October 1934.

Swamiji will be leaving this for Travancore to-morrow.

A disciple—.Swamiji said that Siddhi will be attained in course of time. May not the time be shortened by personal efforts?

S. All are not alike in power, perseverance, and steadfastness. What Totapuri attained after strenuous labour extending over 40 years was attained by Sri Ramakrishna in 3 days. Men are of two kinds. One is the idealist or dreamer, the other, the practical man. The first kind will dream and make many plans, but will never do anything to carry them out. The second

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will strive with all his might. Great ideals and aspirations are not bad. What I mean is that one should never sit idle, but strive incessantly. When the ideal is a high one and you feel it beyond your power to reach it, you are apt to give up all efforts to attain it. That should not be. You must go on struggling. Don't accept a man's words simply because he is considered great. You must think, reason and find out for yourself whether there is any truth or substance in the words. My words also should be tested like that.

D. Is not blind faith in the guru necessary?

S. Sri Ramakrishna warned us not to accept anything without proper reasons. The word of the guru can be accepted as the highest authority only after you have thoroughly examined and reasoned it out and fonnd it worthy of credence and acceptance. 'Blind faith' will naturally follow.

D. Is not service to the guru essential for God-realisation?

S. Certainly, yes.

D. What sort of service?

S. All acts commencing from bodily service to the doing of what the guru considers good and desirable, of whatever is pleasing and acceptable to him, are included in the word service.

D. Is a physically weak man fit to think of God?

S. Why not? Thought is a mental act, not a physical one. What matters it if the body suffers. Suppose a sick man loses all his wealth; what will be his condition? Will he not be always thinking of his lost wealth or will he give up all thought of wealth because he is sickly. Health is not the primary thing, but it is intense pain at the thought of separation from God.

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D. 'Nayam atma balaheenena labhyah!' The Atman is not to be attained by the weak, says the Upanishad.

S. The word Bala (strength) in the Upanishad refers to Manobala (strength of mind). If physical strength were meant, Sandow and Ramamurti would have put God in their pockets. 'Dheeranam eva Muktih Karatalagata'. To the man of firm resolve comes Mukti. One must be steadfast in matters spiritual. One may hesitate to stand before the mouth of a cannon. That does not mean that a Sadhaka is not bold. It is the strength and boldness to overcome all obstacles in one's spiritual path that is wanted, and that is enough. An aspirant's strength of mind is in absolute reliance on God and giving up everything else without caring for what will become of him in his old age or what will befall him if he lives alone and separated from all friends and relations.

A visitor.—How can we have Vairagya?

S. If you want to leave the west, you have simply to proceed eastwards. To stand still and ask the west to go away from you is folly. To detach yourself from sense objects, you have to attach yourself to God.

Q. Is renunciation of home absolutely necessary for God realisation? Is it not a sort of hard-heartedness to give up one's wife and children?

S. The more you approach God, the more you are automatically removed from home. What is apparently renunciation is really acquisition. In giving up one house, you take up hundreds of houses. You give up the thought of one body and begin to love crores of bodies. The idea of 'I' and 'mine' which was originally confined to one body and one home gradually expands and envelopes all bodies and the whole universe. That is the experience of the real Sanyasin. He sees and feels that there is nothing else

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in the universe but he and his. He loves and serves all living beings. Is this hard heartedness? Or is it the other, the love of one home and a handful of bodies occupying it and readiness to despise and injure all other homes and bodies for their sake? Which is real hard-heartedness?

November 1933.

Q. Do the scriptures enjoin animal sacrifice?

A. Yes. If it were not so, how could Sishta-chara countenance it?

Q. How can killing be Dharmic?

A. Sacrifice is not killing, it is offering, dedication.

Q. Do the Shastras prescribe human sacrifice also?

A. No, only animal sacrifice. 'Yajnartham pasavah srishtah' say the Vedas. Animals were created for sacrifice.

Q. During meditation, I don't see the form of the Ishtam, it is all darkness only.

A. Make Japa continuously. In course of time you will get everything.

Q. But the mind runs away from the Ishtam.

A. That does not matter. Fix the mind on the Mantra. Even when the mind is restless, do not stop Japa.

Q. It is very very difficult to control the mind.

A. Do not try to control it. Keeping on making Japa, mind will come under your control by and by.

Q. What sort of purity is to be observed for making Japa.

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A. There is no rule as to external purity. You may repeat the Mantram at any and all time, eating, bathing, playing, etc.

Q. May it be uttered aloud?

A. It may, but others should not hear it.

Q. Even after having read much about Sri Ramakrishna, I don't feel certain that He was an Avatara?

A. What does it matter if you don't believe Him to be an Avatara? Is that an important thing? Respect for that ideal and effort to realise some at least of those divine qualities are the things necessary. Do you believe that He was a man of realisation? That is enough.

Q. Is there no difference between an Avatara and Jivanmukta? Has an ordinary Siddha all the powers of an Avatara?

A. Powers? What do you mean by it? The knower of Brahman becomes Brahman which transcends all sorts of powers. Powers are far, far below the Brahmī State. The knower of Brahman has gone beyond all powers.

Q. Yet, I wish to know if Sri Ramakrishna was an Avatara?

A. Who can say that? It all depends on individual temperament and tendencies. Some take Him as an Avatara. Others consider Him an ordinary man. To some Rama and Krishna are not Avataras, but Gandhiji is. Such questions are foolish.

Q. Is the Ishtam to be meditated inside or outside the body?

A. When the mind gets concentrated, you will not know whether the Ishtam is inside or outside. To make a distinction between outside and inside is itself

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a low state. The object of meditation is to get rid of all such distinctions.

Q. Can a devotee of Shiva worship in a Vishnu Temple?

A. Why not? Does he not know that it is his Shiva that is present in the Vishnu Temple?

Q. If two aspects of God are loved alike by a devotee which is he to prefer?

A. Has God only two aspects?

Q. No, he has infinite aspects.

A. Well, he may take up any aspect. Bathe anywhere in the Ganges.

Q. What I intended to ask was, if one may have two Ishtams?

A. Two Ishtams? You say God is one and yet you speak of two Ishtams? To the monists, Ishtam is simply an aspect, two Ishtams are like two limbs of the same body.

Q. During Japam what should we concentrate on, the letters, the meaning or the form?

A. According to one's capacity, begin with the letters and end with the form. Then you will be able to concentrate on all the three simultaneously.

A Mantravadi (magician) once came to the Ashrama. Seeing him Swamiji said:

Bhutas, Pretas and Pisachas have now become very rare It is after the advent of the British Rule that they have become scarce. In my boyhood, Calcutta had plenty of them. Whenever any one fell ill, a Mantravadi was sent for. Now-a-days, even our women want doctors to be sent for, not Mantravadis. Bhutas and Pretas have altogether desisted from causing diseases. They fly away from places where the British

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have established Police Stations, Schools, Railways etc. Now they reside probably in some forests or out of the way villages. According to the census, they have very much decreased in numbers. Why is it so? Is it because they have fled away, being afraid of the British or is it they have died? What does the Mantravadi say?

M. I think, Swamiji, they must have died. Longevity is for 120 years at the most. On the expiry of that period even Bhutas and Pretas must die.

S. (To the disciple). What do you say?

D. It is only the weak-minded that are affected by Bhutas.

S. So you mean that all the people of the old days were weak-minded and that the present generation is all bold.

May 1935.

Addressing the young Nambudiri disciple, Swamiji said:—It is high time that the Nambudiries introduced some reforms in their customs and manners. Among them, the eldest male alone marries. In old days, they were the law-givers. Being intelligent, they adopted* 'Makkatayam' for themselves and introduced †'Marumakkatayam' among Nayars. They thus put on a firm basis their joint family and its property. Their greed for money made them give a certain high social status to non-Brahmin nobles. Such tricks won't work hereafter. Now it is the reign of the British. They are the present law-givers.

The Nambudiries have lost their influence over the other communities. All communities have now begun to get laws made by the Legislatures for the progress of their respective communities. They are no longer willing to be led by Nambudiries. The latter, if they want it, are welcome to serve the other communities who are rising above them.

* Descent of property through males. † Descent of property through females.

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May 1935.

Addressing the devotees present Swamiji spoke as follows :—

Some people are under the impression that the same Hindi is spoken throughout India. That is a mistake. Each Presidency, each area, has its own distinctive language. But then there is an attempt to destroy the differences. Is it possible? Literary language may, to a large extent, be made uniform; but spoken language can never be. Variety is the essence of creation. Destroy it and you destroy creation itself. But who can destroy creation? There are different varieties of sugar. You want to do away with the variation and to make them all one. You therefore collect all the different varieties and thoroughly mix them, and imagine that the differences have vanished. But what is really taking place? Crystallization! The different varieties crystallise themselves and remain separate. That is nature. Superficial and artificial unification can never be permanent and it can never cure any of the evils in the world. What we can do is to allow the fly-wheel of the world to run on smoothly. Mutual love is the lubricant to be applied to the wheel. Differences will always remain. But that does not mean that people should quarrel with each other and fly at each other's throat. Let them allow perfect liberty of growth to all. Human nature is highly conservative. Deep-rooted habits stick on to man. Let each community work and grow according to its own Dharma (nature) without injuring others. How can the world get on without all communities co-operating with and loving one another. Division of castes is based on this great principle. All cannot do all sorts of work. The judge who sits on the bench to pronounce judgment according to law and equity cannot be expected to go to the fields with plough in hands. Hence the necessity for division of labour. The

Lubricate the Fly Wheel.

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Brahmins should not hate the Sudras, the Sudras should not envy the Brahmins. All should unite in mutual love and co-operate for the common welfare. This is what is called Collectivism. It is opposed to Individualism. Individualism is nothing but self-seeking. Societies with large-hearted individuals alone last long. Like individuals, they grow but slowly. It is impossible to distribute the wealth of the world equally to all. The hoarded wealth of the millionaire need not be made to rot, nor need it be utilised for his own luxury only, but may, partly at least, be utilised to relieve the distress of his suffering neighbours. Look at the great Avataras. When Dharma or spirituality decays in course of time, it gets itself collected and condensed, and takes the form of an Avatara. As water gets collected in clouds before the break of the monsoon, so all the blessed qualities which go to make for human welfare get collected in the Avatara-purusha. After the departure of the Avatara-purusha, the spiritual energy which was collected in the Avatara gets widely distributed. That is to say, it is showered on the deserving recipients. The Avataras are most liberal. They don't therefore exhaust themselves. It was said by somebody when Swami Vivekananda entered Mahasamadhi that he has not ceased to exist, but that giving up an individual body, he has entered the collective body. That is very true.

Avataras.

At this stage, an elderly gentleman came in, seeing him Swamiji said: "This gentleman is a great Vedantin you may ask him anything about its profound truths."

The gentleman.—I want to know, Swamiji, why God created the Universe.

Swamiji. Because of his stupidity. (All laugh.)

G. I ask in all seriousness.

S. I reply in all seriousness. But however serious we are, God is playful. He is like a child The child

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makes a toy-house in all seriousness. The next moment he dashes it to the ground To us, calculating and serious grown-ups, it is all a folly.

May 1935.

Q. What is the difference between Bhakti and Nishkama Karma ?

A. They belong to two different categoris. The paths are different. The question is not about the difference between Sakama and Nishkama Karmas. Bhakti has its roots in love of God for its own sake. The root of Karma Yoga or Nishkama Karma is unselfish love for humanity.

Q. Should a Bhakta do Nishkama Karma ?

A. He need not, necessarily. He may, if he likes. If he does it, it will conduce to the purification of his mind. Bat a Bhakta's supreme duty is to love Bhaga van. Similarly a Karmayogi's highest duty is to serve humanity. If a Karmayogi has Bhakti also, it will help him to act with greater efficiency and Sraddha.

Q. What is tapas ?

A. Real tapas is self-control, destroying the evil tendencies of the mind. Standing on one leg for 12 years or standing for long, is all a lower form of tapas. The best tapas is to take away the mind from the world and to place it at the lotus feet of the Lord.

The disciple has come with a new friend of his. Swamiji asked him who it was. The disciple informed Swamiji that he was a friend who wished to see Swamiji.

The friend to Swamiji.—My mind is ever unsteady Sometimes I feel that wordly pleasures should be my goal. At other times I think I should love God. I cannot fix my mind on either. What should I do ?

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S. All are in the same condition. We wish for very many different things.

F. I pray that Swamiji may be pleased to remove my restlessness.

S. Swami has no power to control your mind. Swami may at best give you certain instructions. If you follow them you may get peace of mind. The teacher can but instruct. The learning must be done by the pupil himself.

At this stage, another gentleman came in. Swamiji gives him a proper welcome. He begins to ask.

V. I have heard that Swamiji is a disciple of Sri Ramaktishna.

S. I don't know that.

V. Are you not a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna?

S. How can I know that? Is it I or Ramakrishna that is to determine whether I am His disciple?

V. Yet, you must have undergone some training under Him.

S. Oh, no. I have gone to Him and seen Him. That is all.

V. Any way, you are a member of the Ramakrishna Mission?

S. I am an applicant. I cannot say if Ramakrishna has accepted me. Suppose I have applied for a Dewanship; who is to decide whether my application has been granted? Is it I or the Raja?

V At least you have had the good fortune to see Ramakrishna.

S. To see! What of that. Several persons in the temple at Dakshineswar have seen Him. The sweeper of His room and His water carrier saw Him daily. Our seeing Him! Of what avail is it? To

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see Him as He reveals Himself to us is a different matter. Such seeing alone is seeing, worth the name.

V. Which is your native place?

S. The whole world.

V. You were born in Bengal?

S. This time this gross body took birth in Bengal. That is no consequence. I have taken birth in many lands. This world is a wayside inn. Man is thrown hither and thither in it as a stone rolled from the top of a mountain. That is what the Hindus believe.

V. May I ask you a few questions?

S. Oh, yes, at your pleasure. But my knowledge of English and Science is very limited. I am not at all confident that my explanation will satisfy you. I am a very insignificant person. I may not be able to give satisfactory answers to your very serious questions. I shall try my best.

V. Can God be seen?

S. What do you mean by the word 'seen'. Is it perceiving by the sense organs?

V. By the sense organs or in other ways?

S. An anthropomorphic God can be seen by the senses. A transcendent God cannot be seen by the senses.

V. Can a transcendent God be seen in any other way?

S. How can I say that? I am within the range of the senses.

V. I shall tell you what I want to know. Recently I had two extraordinary experiences. Both were of different kinds. One may be said to be subjective and the other objective.

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S. That distinction is wrong. Both are of the same kind. Where there is the subject, there is the object; where there is the object, there is the subject. They are interdependent. All perceptions are the result of the union of the subject and the object.

V. But my conception is not like that. I classify experience like this: experiences arising from inside the body are subjective, those arising out of contact with the external world are objective.

S. My friend, you do not grasp what I say. Take the case of the salt-doll in the illustration given by Sri Ramakrishna. The doll is the subject when it is tasting the sea water. When it gets dissolved the subject vanishes and along with it the taste-experience of the subject which results from the conjunction of the subject and the object.

V. Yes, I admit it. Now let me tell you something of my experience.

He then began a detailed description. Seeing that it would be a never ending one, Swamiji intervened and said:

S. I don't want to hear the details. What is it that you conclude from all that?

V. What I want to know is the reason for such experience.

S. Who can give the reason? Can we account for all our experiences in life?

V. But this is not such an ordinary occurrence.

S. Every experience can, in a sense, be said to be extraordinary. The experiences of two men are never seen to be the same anywhere. A child's first experience of the Railway train is felt by it to be extraordinary. But to a grown up man, there is nothing extaordinary in it. So the distinction we make between ordinary and extraordinary has no substance in it.

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V. How is it that we have such experiences?

S. The same old question! Different people have different experiences. For example, people in the Arctic regions see many wonderful phenomena. We cannot see them. How can we explain those experiences of theirs. Can you explain how this chair has assumed this particular form. Why was this chair made out of a particular timber and not from any other.

V. It had to fulfil a purpose in this world and so it came into being.

S. Indeed! That is a fine way of expressing 'I do not know'. When plague breaks out, the Health authorities attribute it to rats. How? There are certain germs or bacilli in the bodies of the rats and they cause the epidemic. But why do these bacilli have a partiality for rats' bodies? And why do they cause that terrible disease. There stops man's inference. It cannot go further.

V. Then I shall drop the question why. I shall be satisfied with knowing what it is.

S. Experience is experience, what else? It is imagination only.

V. Are all experiences imagination?

S. Certainly.

V. Then this body is imagination, God also is imagination?

S. Why doubt it? Our conception of God, the God which we think of in the mind, is the product of our mental activity.

V. At one time, I had the experience as if the disc of the moon was powdered and put into my eyes and I felt great bliss. Another time, I heard the voice of thunder within my body and I prayed to God

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to save me immediately. Something happened then. Either my head rose up or the sun came down, I am not sure what it was, but one thing is certain, my head came into contact with the sun's orb and I felt relief. May these be regarded as the results of the blessings of an impersonal Guru ?

S. I told you, it is nothing but imagination.

V. What is the use of going to Mahatmas, then ?

S. Do Mahatmas force you to go to them ?

V. People go to them.

S. Is it any reason why you should go ?

V. Is a personal guru indispensable ?

S. For some ; not for others.

V. My question is general.

S. Ask whether you should have a guru. Why bring in the whole world. You want your need to be the need of all humanity. I may ask, do men want to take one glass of water ? Who can answer the question ? Some men want one glass, others do not want it ; whether you want it, will be your proper question.

V. Then I shall ask :—Do I stand in need of a human guru.

S. Do I stand in need of a glass of water ? Is it to be decided by another ? If I were you, I could have known if you were thirsty or not. But that is not so. Every one must decide for himself.

V. I have described my two experiences. What were they ? That is what I want to know.

S. The same old question, again ! You will be satisfied if you are told that your wonderful experiences have come directly from Godor from your Impersonal Guru. Is it not ? But I am a lover of truth and I cannot tell you so. I am not going to flatter you

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and mislead you by saying that you have had God-realisation.

The visitor was somewhat dejected and soon took leave of Swamiji.

After he left, Swamiji addressed those present and said, smiling :—Look at that gentleman's delusions. What hallucinations! He wants an Apta-purusha's corroboration that his ideas and experiences are all sound. He wants me to tell him that he has had vision of the reality beyond the senses, that he is a Siddha, that he no longer stands in need of any Sadhana. Then he will be quite satisfied. Even from the start, I could sense his motive. That is why I gave him such answers. He must have been quite dissatisfied with me and may not come again. This is the beginning of the disease known as religious mania. When it becomes virulent, it leads one to the lunatic asylum. One should take care from the very beginning. These people are visionaries. They stuff their brains with all sorts of nonsensical beliefs. Divine visions are very common to them. Every now and then they see visions. It is so very difficult to keep the brain cool as intense Sadhana heats it. What I told the gentleman was for his own good. If he has discrimination he will think of it seriously and that will open his eyes. As a matter of fact, even this mania is not altogether bad. It is some good past impression that generates such ideas. Although he has taken a wrong path just now, he will come round in due course. "Tatra tam buddhisamyogam labhate pourvadaihikam. Yatate cha tato bhuyah Samsiddhou Kurunandana". "There (in the next life) the impressions of the previons life are revived and (the man) exerts to reach perfection"—Gita.

May 1935.

Two new Bhaktas have come today, perhaps for the first time. They did not ask any questions.

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Swamiji graciously gave them an account of the Ashrama and went on to say as follows :—

Man has to think of God as human. He cannot think of an Impersonal God. However abstract may be your thought you have to think of a form. Suppose you want to think of whiteness as such, can you do so ? You will think of a white paper or a white wall or some other white substance. Similarly, you cannot think of any quality without the help of some form to which the quality adheres. That is the case with all who are within the limits of the senses, but not with those who have gone beyond them. Very rare are the heroes who realise Brahman by meditation on the formless. I speak of ordinary people. They must have something concrete to fix their mind on. Just as we want the number one to begin with for purposes of calculation, we want a form to begin with for meditation. Once we get hold of number one, we can proceed to multiply it to infinity. Even that infinity is only a conception, an inference. We can have no clear grasp of it. We think of great length and breadth and vast expanse. But length and breadth cannot constitute Infinity. The God of the Christians has a form. They conceive of God as a Judge sitting on the throne in Heaven. The Allah of the Muhommedans is also a God with form, although they speak of Him as formless.

x x x x x

It is not at all good to send our children to the schools of Christian Missionaries. Their teachers stuff the minds of our boys with all sorts of false notions regarding our religion, and poison them, so to say. From childhood they are made to hear of the imaginary evils of Hinduism ; and by the time they are grown up, they have begun to hate it, they have become inveterate opponents of their own Sanatana Dharm. Our images are the target for their ridicule.

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But who knows that what we worship is not the stone-images as such, but the Omnipresent Spirit through their medium. We adorn, honour and worship the pictures of our ancestors. Is it the pictures as such or is it the spiriit of the ancestors that we really mean to worship? The God of all religionists is God with form. Some may think of Him as power or as light. Yet, that also has a form. Can you think of water or light as without any form? There is another thing also to be borne in mind. The forms of God which we worship are not the products of mere imagination. They are actually forms realised by the Rishis. They have actually seen them in Samadhi. The form of Ramakrishna is not pure imagination, but it is drawn from what was seen in actual life. The forms of gods, likewise, were actually seen by the great Seers. Beginners in the path of religion take hold of these forms and they proceed on their onward path. A child has some conception of his father. He thinks of him as one who gives toys and sweets. A grown up son also has a conception. He thinks of his father as a learned man or a wealthy man and so on. Religious conceptions stand exactly on the same level. They vary with the capacity of the devotee to think and realise. Further, there is the time factor. A girl of five, witnesses a marriage ceremony. Does she know what it really means? She makes one doll a husband and another a wife, and so she plays. But she knows nothing about the feelings of a wife. Let her grow into a maiden of, say, twenty years of age, she then begins to feel quite novel sensations. In place of toy-husbands she longs for and tries to win a live-husband. Everything has its own proper season. It is useless to hammer ideas into the brain before the proper time arrives. Can you pass the B. A. degree examination in one day. You have to go from one class to another. So we have the infant standard, first standard and so on.

There is an attempt to unify all religions. That is also out of place and impracticable. The different forms

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of religions and their different grades have their own use. The God whom man worships must always remain human in form although endowed with super-human powers. 'Sahasraseersha Purushah'. (God is thousand-headed). So says the Purusha Sookta. While man's forms, powers and enjoyments are all limited, those of God are all unlimited and infinite. So the difference between man and his God is only in degree, not in quality. Man is but a drop in the ocean which is God. He is not different from God.

A devotee:—Which form of God is to be meditated upon?

S. It depends on one's taste and inclination. Sugar is made into various forms. One boy likes to have it in the form of a puppy, another in the form of a cat. But the taste of both is the same. Both are sugar and both are sweet. All forms of God give the same enjoyment. A father gives money to his four children to buy whatever they like most. One buys a Subramania, the second a Ganapati, the third a Krishna and the fourth a Shiva. That is what you call Poorva Samskara (past impressions). A person of heroic mould will have Sri Rama as his ideal. One of a quiet disposition will like the form of Venugopal. An introspective man takes delight in the calm, meditative and superb form of Shiva.

D. But I have not seen any form of God.

S. No one has actually seen His form. But every one will have some idea of the form. That should be meditated on.

It was about an hour after sunset, and the disciple rose from his seat to take leave of Swamiji.

S. Oh! If you stay here for the night, you will be out-casted, is it not?

D. (Smiling) Yes.

S. That is cowardice.

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D. How can I get rid of it?

S. Try, Try. You want to reach the East. It won't do to call upon the East to come to you. Leave the west and walk on towards the East.

D. I am trying, but not succeeding.

S. Success or failure depends on one's strength. The efforts of a hero are soon crowned with success. But, those of a naturally weak man bear fruit very slowly. Sooner or later, all will succeed. That is certain. Think of yourself as strong.

D. But I feel I am very weak.

S. You are ignorant of your own powers. However low and fallen one may be, he is not wholly powerless. The weakest man on earth has some little power. With that he can begin to practise and increase his powers gradually. Suppose you start for Benares. You can walk a mile a day: Another can walk 20 miles. He will reach Benares sooner than you, but you also will reach it, although later.

D. I despair, seeing that even Yogis fall.

S. You are always argumentative. You don't try to rectify your defects. That is your weakness. You have been hammering this one idea of your own utter weakness into your brain all these years. Look at a new-born calf. What does it try to do? To get up and stand up on its own legs. It may fall a hundred thousand times. Yet, every time it tries to get up. It never loses heart, never ceases from its efforts. What is more, every fall strengthens its muscles. These falls are beneficial. Will ever a child learn to walk if it is always carried by the mother, for fear of a fall? The intelligent mother won't allow the child to sit long like a doll. It will ask the child to get up and walk. The child falls and weeps. Then the mother strikes the place where the child fell. The child is delighted and gets up again. You are like the philanthropist who waits till he becomes a millionaire. Such procrastination will never enable a

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man to become charitable. Begin to be charitable with what you have even if it be a pie. That will strengthen your spirit and increase your power. Gradually you will have the power and the occasion to give away lakhs and lakhs of rupees. Growth or evolution is always gradual. You want to be a Siddha all at once. You want your Guru to take you to Samadhi by one sudden pull. After that, you will love all living beings and practise all Sadhanas, is it not?

"Utsahinam purusham upaiti Lakshmi etc."

Haven't you heard this sloka? You know its meaning. Explain it to these gentlemen.

Well, let all these Vedantic talk stop for the present. This won't help you now. It is getting dark and it is about to rain. You have to cross the river. Your Vedanta will not save you now. A Christian Missionary was crossing a river in a country boat. The Missionary asked the boatman whether he knew anything about the stars.

No, Sir, said the boatman.

'A quarter of your life has been wasted!' Said the Missionary. 'But then, haven't you studied Literature or Science' asked the Missionary. 'Nothing of that either Sir', said the boatman.

'Pity! Half of your life has gone in vain. Have you not read the Bible at least, and do you not attend Church?' 'Oh Master! I am a poor man, I know nothing, I make a living out of this."

"Alas! Alas! three-fourths of your life has been actually lost" said the Missionary most sympathetically.

By the time, a storm began to blow and the boat began to dance. The boatman asked the Missionary if he could swim.

'No!' said the Missionary.

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" Pity of pities, Sir, not only three-fourths, but your whole life now goes in vain" said the boatman. (Loud laughter.)

So, to be practical now, let Vedanta be dropped for the present.

Das (the disciple) took leave.

Friday, June, 1935.

It was 5 P.M. Swamiji was sitting in the portico surrounded by devotees. Of his own accord Swamiji began :—

Ramakrishna the Religious Laboratory Demonstrator.

" Brahmins were the custodians of Vedic knowledge and Dharma. They kept it for themselps without imparting it to others. The result is now patent. Every action, whether good or bad, has its reaction. He who injures must himself apply the remedy. That is what we see. Brahmins are in the forefront of all reforms in these days. They have to be, for that is the reaction of the original shutting out of all cultures from the masses. These are times of change in everything, customs, manners, law, politics, economics and everything else. But, there is a basic principle running through all these. That principle is changeless. That is God. It was to point out, to make manifest to us, this immutable basic principle that Sri Ramakrishna came. God is the goal of all Indain activities. Religion is the life of our land. If that is taken away, India perishes. India cannot understand or appreciate politics divorced from religion. Nor can India comprehend Industrialism for its own sake without reference to our supreme goal, Mukti. Once Gokhale said at Bangalore that politics should stand apart from religion. People did not accept his words. The same Gokhale said in after years that politics must be spiritualised, if it is to touch the hearts of the masses. Experience taught him the truth about our nature. Tilak, Gandhi and others also have understood this. That is why they have

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mingled Religion or Morality with Politic and that is why they have a following. Sri Ramakrishna came from an obscure village. He was like an uncut diamond. He did not come to lecture or to argue about God, but actually to show God to us. The existence of God cannot be proved by logic, however keen or subtle it may be. If Ramakrishna had had the modern educaion, He would have been claimed as a product of University education. But He had it not. He was simply the embodiment of the spiritual energy of India. Just think of how gigantic His intellect was. Without education, without association with the educated, without any of the present day culture, He could dive deep to the very bottom of all mundane and spiritual matters, keenly observe and correctly understand the multifarious tendencies of the modern minds, see far into the future and prescribe appropriate remedies for all its ailments. Sankara, Ramanuja and the other Avataras of old came to establish special systems of religion. Their method was learned discussion, interpretation of texts and creation of literature. They had to be great scholars. Not that they had nothing else to do. They did not simply revel in intellectualism. They had as much to do in the realm of the Spirit as in the domain of the intellect. They had to satisfy the intellect by reasoning and also to satisfy the spirit by realisation. They could not avoid being scholars themselves. But this time, there was no necessity for scholarship. This is an age of demonstration. No amount of theories or arguments will satisfy the people. Every fact has to be demonstrated in the laboratory. So Sri Ramakrishna came not as a scholar but as a demonstrator, a great religious laboratory in Himself. He did not theorise. God is. I see Him, I can show Him to you, that was what He said. He did not argue. Though Himself illiterate, the proud heads of profound scholars touched His feet in all humility and reverence. He did not come to establish any sect or any special form of religion. India has had to bear many a severe blow struck by foreign hands from time to time;

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she has had to suffer many a dire calamity, to tide over many a difficulty, to escape many a peril on her way. She grappled with all opposing forces, subdued them and survived them all. She did not die. Her spirit was not touched, much less broken. If it had been broken, she could not have given birth to a Sri Ramakrishna. By producing Him, India has once more declared to all the world that she will not die, however much her enemies might try to crush her, to take her life away. Her life, her Dharma, though apparently dead or slumbering, will rise up and assert itself. Sri Ramakrishna held that Dharma aloft. Along with that He held up the Dharma of other lands as well. If Hindu Dharma alone was His concern, He would not have practised Christianity and Muhommedanism. He did not merely utter by word of mouth that all religions are true. He actually practised them and found them true and then proclaimed that all religions are really true and if practised sincerely, lead to God. He did not make a cosmopolitan religion like the Brahmo Samaj by picking up some essentials from all and combining them to form a new one. That is something like creating a new and wonderful form with Japanese nose, European eyes, Indian face and Negro body. He did not attempt it. He left each religion intact without any admixture At the same time, He realised their underlying unity, the recognition of which alone will lead to harmony and mutual tolerance. All the different religions will continue to exist as at present. There will be no change in their external form. The internal essence, the core, will be found to be the same, as vitalised by Him. The Christian will remain a Christian in form; his spirit will be permeated by Sri Ramakrishna. So with the Muhommedan. Gradually the whole world will be influenced by His spirit and take shelter at His feet.

Recently there was a controversy in some news papers. I read it. The Brahmos claimed Him as a Brahmosamajist, because, they contended, He used to be present at their meetings. The Shaktas, on the other

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hand, opposed them saying that Sri Ramakrishna was an out and out worshipper of Shakti and therefore a Shakta. Christians are not wanting who hold that He was an incarnation of Christ. All of them want Him as their own. None rejects Him, only each one of them desires to make Him their exclusive property although, in fact, He is the common property, the common ideal of all. He is the guide not only to all religionists, but to all materialists, nihilists and atheists. The Avataras of old gave Brahmajnana only to devotees of steadfast faith and long record of good Samskaras. Such deserving souls alone got their grace. But Sri Ramakrishna calls upon all—even rank atheists—to partake of Brahmajnanam. "Oh! man! I shall show you the truth which will make you free." That is Ramakrishna's message. He was actually instructing the atheists as suited their nature. He may not be easily understood by the hard fossils who stick fast to their lifeless, meaningless Acharas, who have never cared for what is vital in their religion and who are quite satisfied with the rotten surface-accretions. Even these frogs in the well will come to Him in due time. The rays of this uncut and unpolished gem will issue forth and illumine all lands. It will then be reflected back to India. The reflection will be of the gem as cut and polished by the foreigners according to their taste and understanding. It is only then that Indians will open their eyes to His glory and understand Him The gem is our own, not of the foreign people. They will simply give it a graceful shape and polish. They will interpret His life according to their own lights; and for the superhuman elements and events in it, they will give scientific reasons and explanations. Whether explained rationally or not, Truth will always remain Truth. His life and glory do not depend upon any scientific explanation. They shine in their own right. Hereafter the work of all institutions and the life of all nations will be moulded in Ramakrishna-fashion. Politics and Government and all such things will have to pass through that mould, viz., Ramakrishna. I may not

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live to see all those wonderful happenings. The next generation will see it. The Power of Ramakrishna is now in its infancy, just beginning to spread. That mighty Power will take years to fully manifest itself and to envelop the world. All things will be pervaded, devoured by it. The effulgence of Sri Ramakrishna will permeate everything. There will be no 'Ramakrishnaism' or Religion of Ramakrishna. There is no question of sectarianism at all. His spirit will be accepted by all. I do not know if you understand what I say. I labour under a disability. I find no words to express what I have in mind. What was He! How very few have understood Him. But there are some who can foresee things. They can and do see even now how Sri Ramakrishna has attracted the heart of the world, how all organisations, institutions and religions and lives of different nations have begum to flow towards that ocean, that mould which is Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Vivekananda told Professor Duessen that Europe will ere long be consumed by the fire of mutual destruction. "How can you foretell that?" asked the Professor. 'I have eyes to see it' replied the Swami. Within 15 years after that, began the Great War. Distant events are foreseen by great Seers.

A devotee :—In the spiritual talks of the President Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) it is said that a peculiarity of this age is that the Guru appears before the disciple even after he gives up the gross body. Was it not so even in former ages?

S. I do not know. It may be his experience. Since Maharaj has said it, we cannot but believe it. Others also have said like that. Avataras are not repetitions of old happenings. Each Avatara fulfils the need of the age. Sri Rama and Sri Krishna came with very strong bodies. That was necessary then. Today there is no need for such a strong body. So Sri Ramakrishna did not come as a fighter. Scepticism and Nihilism were not so rampant in those old

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days, and there was no need then, perhaps, for the Gurus' post-mortem appearance. This Yuga believes only in what it sees, in what is demonstrated. People don't believe anything easily. Events follow the law of supply and demand. Where there is a demand, there there is a supply. Where there is a real want, there is a fulfilment. As I told you the other day, even Pretas can assume human form and appear before us. Much more so, then, can Gurus who are great Siddhas take human forms and appear before us. Not that the old Acharyas had not the power, but there was no necessity for them to do so then.

June 1935.

A Visitor :—I want some religious advice.

S. That is very general and vague. Religion is the internal nature of every one. Every one is born with religion. There is none without religion. Even atheists and materialists have religion innate in them. How can it be otherwise ? Atman resides in all. The desire to realise it, is religion. The difference is in the degree of its manifestation. In some it is obscure, in others it is bright. Where the covering is very thin, the manifestation is bright. On the other hand, where the covering is very thick, it is obscure and imperfect. A stone chimney shuts out all light. But if the same chimney is somehow made transparent, the light-waves emerge out at once. A blue chimney gives out blue light and a red chimney gives us red light. Both are light. Similarly materialists also are theists in one sense. With them, theism takes a gross form. Spiritual men are those whose coverings have become very thin and materialists are those whose coverings are very thick. What the spiritual men call Atman is called by the meterialists, matter. Both refer to the same substance.

V. How is Atma-Jnana to be attained ?

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S. That is what I said. It has not to be acqired. You have it already. Remove the obstruction to the passage of the light of knowledge. Suppose the current in a river is obstructed. You have simply to remove the obstacle, not to make a new current. Remove the obstruction, the river flows of its own accord. Similarly, remove the coverings and the Atman or Religion shines of itself.

V. How to remove the obstacles?

S. By Sadhana. Firstly, have the desire for self-realisation.

V. In the absence of that desire, what is the way?

S. Associate with people having that desire. You want to become a good musician. What will you do? You will frequent music parties, and associate with good musicians. One desiring to become a painter will seek the company of great painters. Drunkards seek out drunkards for company.

V. What Sadhana is to be practised?

S. It varies with individuals. Your Sadhana may not be another's. The lessons in the infant standard are not those of the B. A. Class. A child and an adult cannot be taught the same thing. Men are of different grades. The tendencies and powers of each can be known only by a Guru. You must see your Guru. He will advise you.

V. Who is a Guru?

S. Guru means a teacher proficient in the subject. A good chemist is a Guru for chemistry. A musician cannot teach chemistry. To learn about the Atman you should resort, yourself to a knower of the Atman. The first religious teacher is the mother. The second is the fathar. Any other guru comes only after them. But parents are generally ignorant and they

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cannot give any religious instruction to their children. They have therefore to seek an outside Guru. What has been said so far relates to the preliminary lessons in religion. For those who want to specialise in religion and who have made religion the highest goal in life, ordinary Gurus will not suffice. They must seek the aid of a Guru who is an adept in reading the subtle and hidden tendencies of the human mind, who has realised God and who can transmit the knowledge to another. The Guru must be a Srotriya and Brahmajna. As Sri Ramakrishna has said, you can light a flame from another flame.

A devotee :—Is it any use repeating a mantra got from one who has not himself realised its meaning ?

S. That is a good question. But before getting an answer you should know what mantra means. Orthodox Hindus have a false notion that mantra means something very secret. There is nothing secret in it. It is simply a word, denoting an idea. Suppose this gentleman's name is A. B. Sivaraman Nair. It takes some time to utter the full name. For convenience's sake I call him A. B. A.B means A. B. Sivaraman Nair. Similarly, a devotee is given the mantra 'Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Krishnaya'. It takes a long time to repeat it. So to shorten it he is asked to repeat 'Krim'. The Bijas are what the Rishis realised by divine knowledge. Man cannot have any conception of Brahman, the totality of God. So, many Bijas have arisen. All Bijas are symbols of the various phases of the one undivided existence. Each symbol fixes in the mind the form of the God represented by it. That is all the importance of mantra. People have a strange notion that mantra is something very mysterious, the repetition of which will give you the four-fold Purushartha. Make a gramophone repeat the Krishna Mantra. Will it have any effect ? For Japa to be effective it must be an intelligent action. The song which arises from a human throat overpowers the human mind. The same song proceeding

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from a gramophone sounds harsh. Look at the great difference between the two. The human songster infuses life into the song. The machine has no life. The song of the machine is therefore lifeless and dry. The mantra vitalised by an Acharya who is a knower of Brahman takes effect. Any and every man cannot vitalise a mantra. It is only the knower of Atman that can do it. He who gives the mantra should know its meaning and should have realised it. Therefore the first injunction in Mantra shastra is that the Guru should instruct with full knowledge of the mantra. The second injunction is that the Sishya should be deserving to receive it. He should also know what he is going to receive. It is only in a lamp with oil and wick that you can light a flame and keep it burning. Before receiving mantra-deeksha, one should examine oneself and see if he really desires to have it. Strong and genuine desire is necessary. Simply visiting a Mahatma is not of much use. Even if a mantra is received, it cannot be made productive of result. If the desire is very strong, the help of even an ordinary Guru can raise the Sishya. Some have the foolish idea that if they get mantram from a Siddha guru they have nothing more to do. Unless the field is properly prepared, what will the seed alone do? It is not at all uncommon that University students who have all convenience for acquiring vast knowledge get miserably plucked in their examination, while humble students in moffusil schools take the fisrt rank in theirs. Not even the expert teacher can make dullard a learned man. Self-sufficient men do not depend upon others. They exert and raise themselves by their own powers. To a child just beginning to walk, the mother holds out her fingers. The child catches hold of them and begins to walk with faltering steps. In a few days, it is able to dispense with the help of the mother's fingers. It walks steadily. The power of walking is latent in the child. The mother is only a help. But if the child is lame, the mother's help will be of no avail. The

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child whose limbs are alright may fall a thousand times and may get bruised very often, yet he will get up every time he falls. As I told you the other day, every fall adds to its strength and experience. If the child is always carried on the mother's arms, it will grow up weak and sickly and be the worst imbecile in the world.

Sunday, June 1935.

A devotee who is a vakil has come to see the Swamiji.

S. How does the Harijan movement go? What sort of Harijana uplift is meant to be done by G--?

V. All-sided uplift, political, social, economic, educational and religious.

S. Oh! Religious uplift also is intended! How is it? As social and educational status goes up, religion goes down. That is what we see now-a-days. The more one rises in the social ladder, the less he has of religion. That has been my experience. So, the expectation that the Harijans will grow more religious as they occupy the position of the first four Varnas seems to be unwarranted. Reforms should be slow, not sudden. Before raising the depressed classes, they should be made to understand the value of the association with the upper classes. Otherwise they will flounder in their new environments. Suppose all Harijans are allowed temple entry all at once, what will be the result? Will there be any change for the better? Out of mere curiosity they may go to the temples for a few days. Then they will see that they have been befooled by the reformers, for they were led by the revolutionary reformers to believe that temple-entry will change their whole lot and raise them to an eminence. All those expectations are seen to be castles in the air. When they are made to sit along with the Savarnas, their dress will have to be changed. They will have to spend a good lot for their shirts and

Harijan Uplift.

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clothes. They have no means of livelihood and where are they to go for money for extra clothing? They, then, try to burden themselves with heavy debts.

V. So the first reform should be educational, to enable them to earn something.

S. Quite so. To try to raise them as they do now means to uproot them and destroy them altogether. I shall give you an example. A poor fisherman got a pearl, while fishing. Thinking that it is of no use or value, he gave it to some one whom he met on the way. The recipient sold it to a paper merchant for six pies. The paper merchant used it as a paper-weight. A dealer in precious stones happened to go there and see it. At a glance he saw that it was worth thousands of rupees and that the merchant who used it as a paper-weight knew nothing of its value. He asked whether it was for sale and what price he demanded. He said, he would sell it for four annas. A thing worth a lakh of rupees came to his hands for four annas. Without proper knowledge, nothing can be properly utilised or enjoyed. Proper education alone will open their eyes to their disabilities, shortcomings and wants. Educational improvement is impossible without economic uplift. If all Harijans go to school, who will work in the fields, who will feed them? So the primary thing is relief of poverty. They must have sufficient food and clothing, next comes education and lastly social equality.

V. Swamiji's opinion seems to be that the upper classes are advanced in education, wealth and nobility, while the lower classes have more of religion. If so, the mingling of the two must be advantageous to both.

S. How so? It is not merely a levelling up, but a levelling down also. By the Savarnas' association with the Avarnas they (the former) will become poorer, dirtier, and perhaps, even more ignorant. The Avarnas' association with Savarnas will make them less poor,

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less dirty and less ignorant. In the religious field this levelling may result in the Savarnas acquiring a sort of Moodha-bhakti and Asthikya-buddhi. But with its acqulsition they stand to lose every good and noble thing they had. To make the lower castes to sit with the upper castes at the same table is not the way to uplift them. Once I was asked to preside over a tea party got up to congratulate certain workers in the Harijan movement. All the lower class people were invited and made to sit along with the upper class people to drink tea and coffee. After tea, they were given cigars to smoke. They were afraid to smoke in the presence of people whom they considered their superiors. But the revolutionary reformers made them smoke. The organisers pressed me to preside. I rose to speak. The audience began to wince. I went on criticising their ways, ridiculing their foolishness in the name of Harijan uplift and exposing their utter lack of thought and judgment. I did not spare them. From first to last, my words were anything but congratulatory or complimentary. Never again in their lives would they invite me to preside. They had enough of me. I gave them to understand that this uplifting of the depressed classes was a matter which had been thought out by one of the greatest of their country men, Swami Vivekananda. It was not this sort of commingling that he advised. It was something deeper and intelligent. Surface inequalities will remain, but the inner equality must be realised. The real substance in all being is the Atman. The Gita says that a Pandita is same-sighted. " Vidya Vinaya Sampanne. Etc. "

Does it mean that a learned Brahmin is the same as a dog? Certainly not! In the sense-world they do differ greatly. But in Spirit they are the same. Swamiji never advised the Pandita to eat with the dog and the cat out of the same dish. Real equality is in seeing and realising the same Atman in all, in loving and serving all as the manifestations of God. That is

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real philanthropy. God is the material cause of the entire universe with its diverse creatures. Realisation of that truth leads to loving and real service to Harijans. This was the service advised by Swami Vivekananda. He wanted them to be given food and clothing and education, both secular and religious. All that was to be done in the spirit of service to the Lord, as Hariseva. That is superior to the idea of the uplift of Harijanas. Far sighted men like Vivekananda alone can see what is conducive to the whole world. When one realises one's eternal relation with the universe as a whole, it matters not that surface inequalities remain, all men of all classes and castes can love and serve one another for the good of all. Now-a-days Harijan uplift means one day's meeting and cheering. For a day, the Avarnas are privileged to sit alongside of the Savarnas and eat. The next day, they return to their former status; the depressed remain depressed. Are these reformers prompted by genuine love for the fallen and the depressed? No, they want to see their names advertised in the papers!

26th Edavom 1111.

A Hindi Pracharaka has come:

Q. What should be the National language of India?

A. That is a political question and should be asked of a politician. I work in the field of religion. You may ask me any religious question.

Q. Should religion be taught in our schools?

A. Certainly.

Q. What sort of religion?

A. Not one sort. Hindus, Christians and Muhommedans should be taught their respective religions.

Q. If so, how can there be unity between the different religionists?

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A. It is not possible. How can a Hindu unite with a Christian or a Muhommedan with quite a different religion, taste and outlook?

Q. But the central truth of all religions is the same. Only practices differ.

A. It is practices and external forms that lead to disputes and quarrels. Only when all men realise that there is a unity underlying all religions, there will be unity. But that is only a dream.

Q. Then, will these disputes continue for ever?

A. Yes. It has been so always.

Q. There were no religious quarrels during the time of Akbar.

A. Good God! You have not studied history. Akbar tried to establish peace and harmony. He succeeded, to some extent, in temporarily uniting a few. Disputes began with creation. None has been able, as yet, to establish unity. A few Hindus and a few Muhommedans may tolerate each other in a friendly spirit. But wholesale unity is impossible.

Q. Should not untouchability be removed from Hinduism?

A. Hinduism has no connection with untouchability. That is a social practice. If it were a part of Hinduism, Nanda, the Paraia, would not have had the path to Moksha opened to him. Only the gate to high class society was closed to him.

Q. This untouchability is seen only in Hindu society?

A. In another form it is largely seen in other societies, too. You have heard that Lord Curzon could not take his wife—an American Commoner—to social functions of the high class people. If she

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attended, the other ladies walked out. That was an instance of untouchability.

Q. But such divisions and sub divisions do not seem to exist in many other societies.

A. My friend, you are a young man of twenty or twenty five. I am past seventy three. I have more experience of the world. Destruction of caste differences is not the way to establish unity. There are conservatives, liberals and labourers in England. Whatever their differences of views may be, they unite together when their country's cause is at stake. Similarly, Indians also can unite in spite of defferences in religion and caste. You do not understand where the fault lies. You have not seen the root of disunion. It is not caste. Variety is in the nature of creation. I have seen and spoken to many of the political leaders, Messrs. Tilak, Gokhale, C. R. Das and Srinivasa Shastri are some of them. No two of them had the same opinion. They are all experimenting one thing after another. Few had settled convictions. The leaders stand to gain in experience; but the masses stand to lose. It is like a physician trying newly discovered medicines on his patients. The physician gains in knowledge, the patients may lose their lives. Which leader would you follow?

Q. I follow the principles of the Congress?

A. Very well and easily said! But my friend, the views of the Congress change from hour to hour. I should like to know what are the settled principles of the Congress which you follow. My advice to you is, "Do not be like sheep before your leaders." I don't ask you to give up politics and take to religion. All must love their country. You must love and respect your mother-land and work for it. But think well before blindly following these leaders who themselves are not sure of the path they are to follow. They go this way today, and another way tomorrow, and they falter at every step.

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Tuesday, June 1935.

A new Sadhaka :—I worshipped Bhagavati for four years.

S. Which Bhagavati ?

N. S. Soolini.

S. Soolini means one who has Soola (trident) in hand. Which is the form ? How many hands has the form ?

N. S. Ten hands.

S. Then it is Durga.

N. S. At the end of the period she appeared before me and asked me to go to the Ramakrishna Ashrama. Why was I so asked ?

S. Could you not have asked Bhagavati Herself ? How can I know Her mind ? All dreams need not be true ; some may be. If you had true faith in the Devi, you would not have asked this question. The moment you hear Her words you will go to an Ashrma. Since you have had some doubts regarding Her words, you had better wait for some little time. There is no harm in your trying an Ashrama.

Saturday, June 1935.

Addressing the disciple, Swamiji said :—

S. The old Railway Station at Shoranur was a small one. There was no restaurant and all that. On my way to Travancore, I used to put up with the Station Master. In those days a Brahmin was vending coffee and bread on a very small scale. Gradually he rose and today he is a very rich man. He has many employees under him. This transformation took place under my eyes. The Tamil Brahmins are enterprising. They succeed in all undertakings. You Malayalees are a lazy lot. You suffer for it. On account of your indolence you have descended to the very depths of

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poverty. The Nambudiris specially are notorious for their laziness. Their orthodoxy is nothing but selfishness and cowardice. That is to say, they cover their selfishness and cowardice with the cloak of orthodoxy. Real orthodoxy is good. It is faith in the Shastras and following their injunctions. That they have not. Is there any Shastra which says that a Brahmin may keep a Sudra woman to satisfy his lust and that he may discard the issue born of the connection? Is not the issue partly at least of Brahmin origin? Why is it not taken into the Brahmin fold as was done with Satyakama of the Upanishads? Satyakama went to an Acharya who, before admitting him to the Gurukula, enquired who his father was. Not knowing it himself he went to his mother who also pleaded ignorance of it. Satyakama went back and said openly that his mother also did not know. The Acharya was highly pleased at his boldness and straightforwardness and concluded that he was a Brahmin, because of his love of truth and uprigntness. Being a fearless man, a Brahmin himself, he initiated Satyakama as a Brahmin brahmacharin. So bold and liberal he was. But what do the Nambudiri Brahmins do? They share their bed with Sudra women and when their passion subsides, treat them as untouchables and their issues also as untouchables. Is it Sishtachara or is it a monkey's or a Rakshasa's Achara? Ask them for their authority for this Achara. Let them justify their conduct on the basis of Shastric texts. They have no authority, no justification, no faith in the words of the Shastras, theirs is only selfish Moodhachara.

A devotee has come. He places a bundle of scented sticks before Swamiji and salutes him.

D. I am a vakil's clerk at Pattmbi. For the last 12 years I have been worshipping Sri Ramakrishna, placing a photo of His in my room. I have not had the privilege of seeing Sri Ramakrishna, but today I have the good fortune of meeting a disciple of His. I pray for your blessings.

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S. It is very good that you are worshipping Sri Ramakrishna. Continue to do so without any break. May Bhagavan bless you. He is the Avatara of this age. As Krishna was born in Brindavana, Sri Ramakrishna was born in Bengal. But that does not make Him the special property of the Bengalee. He belongs to all the world. He is the uncle moon. He who was Rama and Krishna has now appeared as Ramakrishna. This is what He Himself told us. Worship Him without break.

D. I feel that Bhagavan Himself is speaking throug Swamiji.

S. You know I am speaking His words. I have no words but His.

D. Bless me that I may have Bhakti.

S. You will have Bhakti.

Earlier in the day Swamiji's words were all fiery.

To this devotee, he was all love and sweetness.

Wednesday, 11th Mithunam.

Swamiji addressing the artist:—

This Ashrama is in memory of Swami Niranjanananda. He has attained Mahasamadhi. (Pointing to a life-size photo on the wall): That is his photo. Will you please take it home and get me a miniature copy of it? (The photo was taken down. There were wires and strings hanging at its back. Smiling Swamiji asked.) Has the photo a tail? Why this string when it has the wire?

A disciple:—The wire may break.

S. Very good! So thoughtful! If the wire breaks, there is the string. If the string gives way, there is the wire. If both are broken? No, you did

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not think so far! This is your forethought. Look! How pretty the tail is! Do you know the origin of the tail? Sri Rama was an Aryan. The monkeys were Dravidians. After killing Ravana, Rama blessed the monkeys and made them men. Then their tail dropped off. Yet, their monkey nature did not leave them completely; they retained the love for their tails. That is why the South Indians have long-tailed Coupins. In North India people wear Coupins, but no tails. The people of these parts have lost their tails but still their monkey nature, and love of tail cling to them and as a substitute for the natural tail, they wear Coupins with long tails. They are dissatisfied if even their pictures have no tails. (All laugh).

Thursday, 12th Mithunam—June 1935.

The gentleman with strange visions has come again today.

G. Swamiji, the other day you gave the illustration of the salt-doll. I thought about it. Suppose I am a wooden doll. What then? I shall not get dissolved. I shall be floating.

S. You have not caught the gist of the illustration. All things in the world, Sun, Moon, Water, Wood, Stone, Man, Salt and all else become God in the final resolution. Modern science has proved that all these apparently different substances can be resolved back into their common elementary substance. There is no meaning then in bringing up a wooden doll in place of the salt doll.

G. Do you mean to say that there is no experience beyond the range of the five senses?

S. I don't say anything like that. There may or may not be. But I cannot speak of anything beyond my experience.

G. Have you had no such experience?

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S. No. My limited experience is all confined within the senses.

G. But I say that there are such experiences. What I spoke of the other day are some such.

S. My Good Sir, you may have experienced them. I don't deny your visions. I only say that my experience is limited and that I cannot judge of anything outside it.

G. Then why has it been said in the Gita "Divyam dadami te chakshuh" (I give you divine vision). Krishna gave a third eye to Arjuna to see His Viswarupa.

S. How can I know the mind of Krishna?

G. Was the Gita meant for Arjuna alone, was it not for all humanity?

S. May be. I do not know your Shastras and Vedanta. What can I say in the matter?

G. Ramakrishna had that experience. Buddha and Sankara had it. Even you must have belief in that.

S. You don't leave me!

G. Do you not believe in that state? If not, why have you dedicated your life to religion? Your very cloth proclaims your belief in the Tureeya state.

S. Do not be duped by the apparel. I see a decently dressed man at the Railway Station. We travel in the same compartment. Taking him to be a decent man of common honesty, I go to sleep unsuspectingly. On waking up, I see that I am relieved of my watch and all. So, trust not appearances.

G. I shall admit that you have not had any supersensuous experience. But you must have had some subtle experiences.

S. All have gross as well subtle experience. Do you think a child has no experience of the subtle?

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The child is rebuked and he feels pain. Is the pain gross, or subtle? Was the body wounded? No. The pain was something fine, not gross. So, gross and subtle are relative terms and will vary according to the natures and conditions of men.

Well, you said you had been to Africa. Give us some of your experiences of that country

G. Africans know many tricks. I have seen some men making their belly jump up very high.

S. (Smiling) My friend, you are ever after feats and jugglery. What is the culture of the africans? Are they good natured, educated? These are what we want to hear?

The gentleman left without much delay.

Another visitor:—The Shastras say that after death man has to suffer in hell for whatever sins he has committed in life. Is it true?

S. I do not know if there are special worlds as hells. But I know that all actions have a result. So far as I know, hell is mental distress. Suppose you go to a holy temple. If even there your mind is troubled by undesirable and painful thoughts you are really in hell, notwithstanding the fact that your body is in a holy place. On the contrary, if, when your body is in such a hell as is described in the Puranas, your mind dwells on the glories of God and is concentrated on blissful thoughts, you are really in heaven.

As if in answer to a devotee's unexpressed doubts Swamiji said:—

None can implant an idea in another's mind. It must come up and develop in its own time. It will be slow and gradual. We cannot see.

D. Is the development step by step? Do good and evil develop alike?

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S. Yes, good develops along side of evil. We cannot see the forces governing human nature. Nothing comes from the outside. The tree with its many branches and twigs are all latent in the seed. But, can we know all that by looking at the seed?

A—and his brother used to come to me as children. One had the samskaras to become an engineer and the other to become a Sanyasin. But those impressions were not patent then. Who can foretell all that? Some currents are working underneath. We are unable to detect them. In the case of some persons, Samskaras develop all on a sudden. A rank materialist and wicked sinner may become a great Yogi in a moment. A great Yogi on the other hand, may become a very wicked man in a very short time. Nature's working is incomprehensible.

5th Vrichigam, 1112.—Dec. 1936.

Disciple:—Should one fix a time or a number of times for Japa?

S. No number, no time. Those rules are all for Sakamajapa. In spirituality which is Nishkama what counting and what calculation is needed? A Bhakta does Japa and meditation simply out of pleasure. He has no purpose to serve like the Sakama who performs a hundred Surya-namaskaras to get himself cured of some disease. In these parts, Nishkamabhakti is rarely understood. The people are so full of Sakama ideas. There is no love of God.

D. I did not mean that. I want to know if Japa must be of the same number of times every day.

S. Japa can be done always. Suppose a weaver is working very busily. Can he not repeat Ram, Ram, all that time? The whole body may be engaged otherwise, yet the mind can silently repeat the Mantras—while eating, walking, lying, you can repeat it.

D. What Mantra should I utter for namaskara?

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S. Every one knows that—'Sthapakaya— — etc.". What is Krishna's or Rama's namaskara mantra, all know, because it appears in print and is not like the Bija which is secret and is not to be let known to others. Go through Prabuddhakeralam where you will see so many mantras. Its subscription is only two rupees. You can well afford to subscribe for it.

30th Mithunam 1111—July 1936.

The disciple went to the Ashrama. Seeing him Swamiji said 'Oh! you have come in this bad weather.'

D. There was no rain when I started.

S. What about S. He must have got your letter. Perhaps the bad weather stands in his way. x x x Did you notice how the whole path up to the entrance-gate has been covered with sand. Now it looks neat and no mud will stick to your feet.

D. The whole compound looks new

S. Yes, there is yet a lot of work to be done. But there is no money.

D. Can I get more physical strength by practising Pranayama?

S. Yes, along with good food and sufficient physical exercise if you practise a little Pranayama, it may give you more strength. But living upon Kanji (rice-gruel) and doing no physical exercise, how can you grow strong by simply blowing your nose? Pranayama means filling the lungs with air by deep breathing. You pump in air into a foot-ball. Does it become very strong? The science of deep breathing for health is of European origin. You are only enjoying their Uchishtam (remnants left after eating). If Pranayama alone gives health, why should the British Government not take advantage of it and save all the money that they now spend on feeding their huge army? India is a poor country and the people can, then, easily

Pranayama.

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become strong by simply breathing in and out. What a foolish idea! Such queer, crazy notions about Pranayama, Yoga etc., I have not seen anywhere except in your country. And the great wonder is that it is the educated people who entertain them. How much of superstition even the educated and cultured man's brain is stuffed with! If Pranayama is so good, why do I not try it myself? Why is it that I am consulting doctors, taking their medicines and the prescribed diet when I am indisposed? I now understand why Swamiji said your country is a 'lunatic asylum.'

As instructed by Swamiji, the idol of Narayana in stone has been beautifully painted. He said: "the image was all dark; nothing to distinguish the eyes, nose etc. Now everything can be seen distinctly. You have no idea of art. Even ordinary things, you do not know. And you want to practise Yoga. Do you know why even the so-called orthodox are so much after Yoga? Because they can save all trouble and expense. They don't have to go to any temple, to purchase camphor and other offerings; no physical exertion, no waste of money, no sacrifice. They can indulge in all vices, can enjoy all worldly pleasures and at the same time become great Yogis. Yoga gives them all for nothing. You also have a little of that idea. But your Yoga is only for physical improvement. Let all hospitals be then demolished! Foolish! A religious man cares very litile for his body. 'Let thousands of bodies go; let me stick to my practice.' A selfish man thinks 'let me take good care of my body first and let me enjoy.' No concern for others, no sacrifice!"

You hear all this. As soon as you leave the Ashrama you forget everything. You don't think over the words.

K—is a little worried over the marriage of his daughters. Why so much anxiety? Gurumaharaj used to say that when a potter makes a pot he also makes a lid for it. * * * *

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Their outward show is hypocrisy. An orthodox Brahmin does sashtanga namaskara before me. Is it out of any real feeling? No! Simply as a custom. That is not good. In America, the master orders and the servent brings him a cup of water. The master at once says: 'Thank you'. What meaning has it? The servant is paid to do his work and he does it. The 'Thank you' is a mere convention, meaningless. You meet one you hate at heart. But you shake hands with him and say 'very glad to meet you'. It is hypocrisy. Politeness is another matter.

Swamiji next went to the Shiva Temple where carpenters were working. Addressing the disciple, the Swamiji said :—See these new designs. How strong the rafters are! Your carpenter with his Tachushastram (Science of architecture) will not approve of it. But, (he added with a smile), this Swamiji knows something of carpentry too. In this country, the peoples' idea of a Swamiji is that he must sit still and not exert himself. A Sadhu doing physical labour is, in their eyes, a mere vagabond, not at all spiritual. While I was in Bangalore I used to do garden work. A gentleman—now an I.C.S. Officer—seeing me grafting trees, exclaimed : "Oh, why Swamiji himself does all this. Let the servants or disciples do it!" That was an educated man's attitude towards manual labour. The rich or the learned or the big man must not do any work. He must remain idle and be surrounded by twenty thousand idlers. This poisonous idea was introduced by the Muhommedan Nawabs. Haven't you heard how at the time of the mutiny, a Nawab was captured by the enemies. He could have easily escaped had he but used his legs. But there was no servant to help him to his shoes. It would have been degradation if he had himself slipped his feet into his shoes. And he could not put his feet on the bare ground! The American conception is just the reverse. Even the President must know all sorts of menial works, tilling the ground, house keeping, cooking, carrying bags like coolies etc.

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7th Karkadakam 1111—July 1936.

Referring to a gentleman's anxiety about his daughter's marriage :

S. Now-a-days parents are very much concerned about their daughters' marriage. Why so much worry? Let them educate their daughters and leave the problem to them. They themselves will solve it. Men have the right of choice between a married or unmarried life. Why do you not give the same freedom to the girls also? There is no impropriety in a girl's leading a Brahmacharini's life. In former ages there were many women who took the vow of life-long celibacy. There is nothing wrong in encouraging women to take such a course. The modern reformer compels the unwilling widow to remarry! The advocates of female emancipation are hammering their ideas into women's heads. That only creates slave mentality. Swami Vivekananda has said that men cannot know women's problems. Women alone know their wants. The only duty of man is to give them proper education and leave their problems for them to solve.

Brahmacharinis.

18th Karkadakam 1111.—July 1936.

A disciple of Swamiji :—A man sits down to meditate. At once bad thoughts enter his mind. If he utilises that time for reading some books, no such thoughts arise. In such a case what is he to do—is he to prefer reading to meditation?

S. No. Meditation should not be given up. It must be practised under all conditions. As for the bad thoughts, one should try to drive them away as they come up. At other times he may read.

Q. The Bhagavata Purana says that the form of the Lord should be meditated part by part at first, and finally the form as a whole. Is it absolutely necessary to follow that rule?

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S. It is not a Vidhi, a rule or injunction. Those who cannot imagine the whole figure are advised to begin by fixing the mind on one part. The child is taught to read letter by letter g o o d. That does not mean that a grown up man also should read like that only. Novices have to practise it that way.

Q. In repeating the mantra, should one think of the meaning also along with it?

S. That depends on individual capacity. A baby is taught to repeat a word and its meaning a number of times. At first it does not know the meaning of the word. Repeating it a thousand times, it begins to understand. So in the beginning, there is only the repetition of the mantra. Thought of its meaning comes later on.

Q. At the outset no Arthabhavana is needed; only repetition of mantra?

S. It is not a question of faith. It is a question of repetition. By constant repetition alone, will the meaning of the mantra dawn in the mind. Don't you see, in music, they go on repeating Sa-ri-ga-ma thousands of times. Do they know at the outset what Sa-ri-ga-ma means? They simply repeat the mysterious syllables without the least idea as to what they signify. Little by little, their meaning will present itself to the mind. At last, the whole purpose of Sapta-swaram will be clear to them and they will be able to create different Ragas. Similarly, in the initial stage, one should go on repeating the mantras. Faith, Artha-bhavana, devotion, mental peace, all come afterwards.

Japa.

Q. Does mantra-siddhi depend on the number of times of repetition?

S. Not at all. Only ordinary mantras which have some wordly object in view have such rules as to the number of times. If you want to bring serpents or ghosts under control, you will have to repeat the appropriate mantra a certain number of times. In spirituality, no

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number is prescribed. God cannot be brought under control by such calculations. You cannot make Him your slave by repetition of a mantra. It depends upon fervour of devotion.

Q. By Siddhi I meant a certain degree of mental purity and not any power.

S. Mental purity must come out of His grace. He will be pleased by devotion alone, not by Mantra Japa.

Q. What then is the use of Japa ?

S. I mean only the calculation of the number. There is no sort of calculation in spiritual matters. All depend entirely on divine grace. By constant repetition one will begin to feel Bhakti. Then divine mercy will descend upon him. Thereafter alone will the Sadhaka's mind be purged of all dross and thoroughly purified.

23rd Kanni, 1112—August 1936.

A few youngmen from Ottapalam have come to see Swamiji. Swamiji asked the disciple to get them seats. After being seated, one of them asked :

Can a wordly man read religious books or practise religion ?

S. Why not ? Certainly he can.

Q. But, will he not misuse his religious knowledge for improper acts ?

S. That is a different question. Whether knowledge enables a man to enjoy wordly pleasures is one question ; whether he will utilise his knowledge for immoral ends it another question.

Q. Will it not increase the sinful acts of the wicked ?

S. May be. But what can be done? Can you send them out of the country. From the very beginning

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of creation they have been trying to root out wickedness from the face of the earth. Have they succeeded? The rogues and thieves will take refuge in religion. Even that is not without its benifits. In the long run it will improve them. Any good act done for long, even with impure motives, will react and transform the hypocrites into virtuous men.

Q. Will abstinence from meat-eating help spiritual growth?

S. How can it? Was not Christ a great spiritual man? Had he taken to vegetarianism? And Muhommed, was he not a person of great enlightenment? Was he not also a meat-eater? Coming to South India, was there not the devotee Kannappar—a wild man with no culture or refinement,—but a great Bhakta? He worshipped Shiva every day with meat. There was an orthodox Brahmin devotee who used to go to the same Shiva Temple to worship. He would purify the temple every day as he saw signs of slaughter there. He had a strong prejudice against the Vyadha-like fellow Kannappar who, he thought, was a very impure man. Shiva wanted to teach the arrogant Brahmin a lesson. One day, Bhagavan appeared before the Brahmin in flesh and blood. He was groping in the dark and seemed to suffer great pain in His eyes. On being asked by the Brahmin what the matter was, Shiva replied; 'I have somehow become blind. The only remedy now is to get a pair of human eyes plucked from some face and placed in place of mine. I have tried all other remedies, but to no purpose. Hearing this, the Brahmin expressed great sorrow and said he would try to get some very effective medicine as it was impossible to get a pair of eyes from a human face. The man went away for some drug or ointment. After a while came the untouchable Kannappar. As soon as he saw his Beloved Lord in that plight, he began to weep. 'Oh! what is the matter with Thee, Beloved Lord' he asked. Shiva gave out the same story. 'Is that all?' asked Kannappar in great delight. 'Will my Lord be

Meat-eating Kannappar.

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all right if I pluck out my eyes and place them in place of Thine ?' he asked. Yes, said Bhagavan. Without a moments delay or hesitation he applied the knife to his eyes, plucked them out and feeling for Bhagavan's face placed them in proper position. Bhagavan got His eye sight and Kannappar, though turned blind, became mad with joy, at the thought that Bhagavan got His eye-sight and was relieved of His pain. Now see how much meat-eating or vegetable-eating has to do with spirituality. I am giving you facts from history, I am not arguing the point.

Q. Mahatmaji says, vegetarianism is indispensable or is, at least, a great help to spiritual progress.

S. Why do you bring in the opinions of particular persons when there are historical facts to the contrary. Can Mahatmaji's opinions nullify actual facts ? However Mahatmaji or any other argues or opines, facts are facts. Why do you take his views alone? Was not Tilak as great a man as Mahatmaji. He was a strong, courageous Mahratta Brahmin who had his own views and convictions different from those of Mahatmaji. Is Tilak nothing ? A liberal minded man will not narrow himself down to one single man's views. What is Mahatmaji after all ? He is a politician, piously bent. He cannot be classed with those spiritual personages like Christ, Buddha etc. He is not an ideal spiritual man. He may be counted along with Keshab Chander Sen and others who were religious and at the same time were social reformers. Mahatmaji has one thing more, politics. You need not attach too much importance to Mahatmaji's views at the cost of other great men's opinions. It is only fanatics like Ghantakarna that do so. (Here Swamiji described Ghantakarna's fanaticism in a picturesque way).

November, 1936—7th Vrischikam, 1112

A devotee :—Swamiji will perhaps stay here for one or two months more ?

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S. Suppose I am going to stay here for life, will you drive me out? (Asking this question, Swamiji had a hearty laugh. He continued). So many are putting this question,—letters after letters, even telegrams from North India—how long are you going to stay there? No! No! Bhagavan alone knows. I cannot say anything about my stay. It depends upon Sri Guru Maharaj's will. Man has no power. It is the height of Abhimana which makes man think: 'I will do this and this.' What power has he? Today he may be strong and helthy, but tomorrow he falls down helpless. Experience teaches us. "Long experience made him sage". Have you not read Goldsmith's 'Deserted village'? There was a rustic, uneducated, illiterate. He had read no scripture or scientific works. Yet people flocked to him, to hear his counsel. Why? Because "long experience made him sage". It had given him an insight into the heart of things. What was the secret of the most cultured men of the age like Keshab Sen and Pratap Muzumdar going to Sri Ramakrishna and mutely listening to His words? Did He ever go to England like them and make eloquent and learned speeches? Did He preach Swadesi, or Socialism, or Khadhar? Did He even do anything to attract public attention? Rather, He shunned publicity and never went out but once at the request of Mathura Babu for a pilgrimage. He used to visit His devotees occasionally, that was all. Yet what wealth of experience and keen observation He had! How much of practical wisdom and common sense in the ordinary affairs of the world He displayed! He threw floods of light on the most common things which we pass by unnoticed. Yet the whole world now worships Him. And what about our most learned men and cultured public men. One day they make a loud noise, the next day they are nowhere. Bhagavan's children form a different class—I mean His direct children. They have vast experience and are very learned also. Yet how obscure and humble their lives are! Look at the great Swami Vivekananda, Brahmananda,

Experience made him a sage.

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Abhedananda and Saradananda; they were all men of wide experience and vast knowledge and very quiet and simple in their lives! Without any pomp or show or advertisement, they did Sri Gurumaharaj's work. You don't care to see things in the proper light. Watchfulness is the secret of one's becoming wise or otherwise.

The next day there was a Katha-Kalakshepam on Bhagavan's life. Swamiji asked the disciple to hear it. After the Kalakshepam was over, Swamiji asked his opinion about it and remarked that it was very difficult to get a proper man to do it.

2nd December, 1936.

Swamiji was seated in the cool and shady mango grove to the north of the Ashrama building. He was getting the branches of the graft mango trees cut by a young Swami. Seeing the disciple, Swamiji said 'Mr. Ottur Nambudiripad is come! Come. When will Sri—come?

D. After the 20th Vrischikam.

S. Today is—what Varam?

D. Tuesday.

S. So, after Saturday? All right.

Chopping branches of trees.

Here people are afraid to chop off the branches of trees. No? Oh! they were laughing at me when they first saw this. 'What a Swamiji is this! He is cutting off branches of mango trees and cocoanut trees. Is he mad?' they asked. Now they see how nicely the tress have grown after the redundant branches were chopped off. The food and energy which those branches were consuming for nothing, now go to these, and next year you will see how they begin to bear. Even the country mango trees require cutting.

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3rd December, 1936.

The next day the disciple went to the Swamiji with a manuscript book in his hand.

S. What is that book ?

D. Some slokas on Bhagavan.

S. Where did you get them ?

D. I wrote them myself.

S. Your own composition ?

D. Yes.

S. What have you written about Bhagavan ?

D. About some incidents in His life.

Swamiji took the book and going throug it said: "It is written in Malayalam characters though the language is Sanskrit. Show it to Purushothamananda when he comes". Then he went on to say "we see lights moving up and down the river at night. What are they ?"

D. May be people fishing in the river.

S. Low caste people or Muhommedans ? I want some live fish to put into the tank here. Fish will eat up much of the impurities in the water and keep it clear. Even wells should have a good lot of fish. Will you make enquiries and let me know if we can get some and at what price.

D. I shall enquire.

5th December, 1936.

'Ottur Nambudiri, come!' said Swamiji on seeing the disciple.

S. How many kinds of leases of lands have you got ?

D. I do not know much about it.

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S. (Sitting silent for a while and trying perhaps to know how ignorant the disciple was in other ordinary matters also, he asked). When a child is born in a Nambudiri house, what are the ceremonies performed? Is there Asoucham?

D. There is Asoucham for ten days. The father of the child bathes and performs Jatakarma—(The disciple did not proceed further).

S. Finished? (expressing annoyance) Can you not describe it further?—On the first day, this ceremony, on the second day, that one; whether relations and friends visit and make presents to the baby or its mother and so forth. Well, is it one of the ceremonies at your marriage for the Nambudiri husband and wife together to catch fish?

Customs and manners, Untouchabily.

D. No. There may be such a practice among a certain section of Nambudiris. This has led some historians to conclude that the Nambudiris were originally fishermen! (Side-splitting laughter).

S. You do not know your own cnstoms, or for fear of being exposed you want to hide it. Yet people have found out your true history. Just as you have written a history of Bhagavan, so write a history of your community.

You must have a Nair woman to nurse a Nambudiri woman after her child-birth. Does she not cook for the mother or does not the mother eat the food touched by the nurse?

D. No, Swamiji, the nursing is done by the Nair woman; but the food is cooked and served by Nambudiri women.

S. No, no. As I said, you do not know even your own customs.

D- The mother will bathe soon after the delivery. This practice is peculiar to Malabar.

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(Again there was hearty laugh at the disciple's ignorance of other peoples habits and practices).

S. Why peculiar to Malabar? In Bengal, even the cows are made to bathe.

D. I mean, bath in cold water.

S. Oh, Yes! In the Himalayas, they are put in ice after delivery. I want an instructive and faithful account of the ceremonies and customs of your community. I should ask an intelligent man.

D. (Making a last attempt at description): When the newborn is a boy, the people at home cry out announcing the birth, whereas if it is a girl, they keep quiet.

S. I can understand that. When a boy is born, you brawl out 'our party has increased by one. It is strengthened and we can loot the womenfolk more successfully'. Our party means the dacoits' party. That is your tyranny over women. You consider them as so many petty creatures. Although you despise them, your great law-giver Manu adores them.

Dacoit's party.

6th December, 1936.

'So, where is Sri'—(the photographer) asked Swamiji as the disciple approached him.

D. He said he would come about the 20th.

S. You see, these people have no idea that they must keep their word. These poor girls have all come nicely dressed in the hope that their photo will be taken today. If he was unable to act up to his promise, he should have written to say so — — Then what about the fish?

Keeping one's words.

D. My servant has promised to bring them today.

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S. Another promise!

(After some pause).

The Maharaja of Travancore has thrown open all the State Temples to all Hindus irrespective of caste. Then your Cochin Maharaja will outcaste the Travancore Maharaja just as your abdicated Raja excommunicated and drove away from his State these poor Nambudiris? He may punish the Travancore Maharaja for his unshastric act.

D. No. He hasn't got the power to do it.

S. In the native States, the Raja is all-powerful. Once I was the guest of the abdicated Raja. He told me, he had the power to drive away the Nambudiris. 'I can do just as I please in my State' he said. There is a Swami, the son of the Raja's brother, who disclosed to me all the facts relating to this incident.

D. It was the community that did it—with the help of the Raja.

S. No, not at all! What is your community? All are slaves of money. If they are paid handsomely they will all say, 'Oh! these are all innocent. They need not be punished!' For gold, they will do anything. They raised the social status of the Travancore Maharaja. They made him pass through a golden cow! 'That is the method prescribed by the Shastras' they said. Look at their cunningness! See again how the most orthodox Nambudiris dine with the Thachudaya Kaimal (a Nayar by birth)! All are slaves of Kanchana. Otherwise why did they not protest against the unjust and unshastric act of the Raja?

D. The British subjects are in no way better. They too are slaves.

S. The British King! Is he a Hindu? What was the necessity for the British subjects to meddle in this matter? It was for you to protest. Why blame you?

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Even the great Bheeshma admitted that all were the slaves of wealth. 'Arthasya Dasāh Sarve'pi' .That was why he sided with Duryodhana!

D. When was Swamiji the guest of the abdicated Raja?

S. Oh, it was some years ago. His brother also was with him then. The heart-rending cries of these helpless men and women whom the Raja out-casted have reached the ears of Bhagavan. x x x

The disciple's servant brought some fish; but all of them, except one or two were dead. "I have not seen that variety before, broad ones with black lines on them. What are they called?" asked Swamiji the next day.

D. Karumatsyam. It is noted for eating vegetable growths and impurities in water.

S. You said you would not send them in the hot sun. But he brought them at noon.

D. I shall try again to get some. I heard Swamiji is going to Bombay.

S. Yes. I shall go on the 11th of December, taking a Chistmas return ticket.

January 1937.

Swamiji has returned from Bomday. Some live fish were brought to the Ashrama by the disciple's servant.

S- (to the disciple) If orthodox Nambudiris were to know of this, would they not beat you and say that you are a fish eater, although at your marriage time, you catch fish! But you will not admit this. Your history has, anyhow, been written that you were originally fishermen.

The fish were put in the tank. After a while the disciple went to Swamiji.

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S. What, Mr. Nambudiri, are you not convinced? Even if you are, you will plead for your community. You are all so selfish. Which Shastra says, that by touching or approaching a Non-Brahmin, a Brahmin will be polluted? Who were the makers of these absurd customs but the selfish Nambudiris? Would the Non-Brahmins have written such books giving you power to keep them at a distance?

Pollution.

D. How could Sankaracharya be selfish?

S. Sankaracharya was never selfish; he never said that a man should be treated worse than a beast. On the other hand, he glorified man by saying that it is after going through millions of births in other bodies that a Jiva obtains, by great good fortune, a human body. And you? Will you allow a Pulaya to come near you? How can the depressed classes improve if you don't allow them to approach you and have Satsangam? Can they ever hope to civilise themselves if you shut all doors of improvement against them?

Dignity of man.

D. Has not Sankaracharya written in his Bhashya that a Sudra has no right to study the Vedas?

S. That is not the point. Did Sankaracharya ever say that a human being becomes untouchable by the mere accident of his birth? Even if he had denied the Sudras the right to studay the Vedas, he did not deny them the right to hear the Puranas and to attend religious conventions. There the first row was to be reserved for Brahmins! "Brahmanan Agratah Kritwa". Brahmins were to be addressed first, then the others. Take the Bhagavat Gita. Is there any mention of untouchability in it? Neither Krishna nor Sankara created this inhuman custom of untouchability. Who, then, did it? You, Nambudiris!

D. The difficulty is that the orthodox Pandits will torture the text of the Gita and make their own meaning.

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S. That is another thing. From what appears as the plain meaning can any of them show that the Gita sanctions it?

D. No. But then, they will quote Manu or some other authority.

S. Let them. Let the Pandits show a single line from any Shastra. A single line will do. Can they?

D. I shall ask them.

January 1937.

As soon as the disciple approached the Swami, he asked: 'Did you ask that question?'

D. There are no Pandits there.

S. Then why did you not ask those orthodox Nambudiris? If they themselves do not know, why do they not call the Pandits to discuss and decide the question? If they do not care to do even so much, how do they profess to be orthodox? 'Your God and Shastras!' They will be thinking within themselves. "We have sufficient food and clothing and comforts. That unaffected, we shall remain content." That is their position, is it not? Selfish cowards! You, too plead for them. When I point out the defects of your community, you want to justify them and hide the real facts. If you are a lover of truth and bold, why can't you tell them, 'you are all insincere! How dare you call yourselves Brahmins. You are neither the children of Rishis nor Devas. You have no religion, no God. Your religion is self-interest and your God 'Kama-kanchana.' I care a straw for your unorthodox customs. I boycott you, you cannot boycott me!' Can't you say like that? No! you are also a coward, weak and timid. If there be but one or two God-loving heroes in your community to stick to truth and stand up fearlessly, all those cowards will kneel down before them. But where are the heroes? Do you think a coward will ever become religious?

Be heroic.

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A godly man never fears. What does Guruvayurappan (Krishna) want you to do? 'Kshudram hridaya dourbalyam tyktvottishta paramtapa' "Shake off this mean faint-heartedness and arise, oh scorcher of your enemies". Every chapter of the Gita emphasises this one point. What is the use of my wasting words on you? Will you, a coward, ever grasp their import?

There is a Padmanabhaswami Temple in Trivandrum, do you know that? Yes. There, they used to observe all peculiar Malabar customs. Not now, perhaps, now they have thrown it open to all. Once I went there to worship Bhagavan. It is your practice to take off your upper garment, if you have one, and tie it below your waist, when you enter a temple or go before a big man. When I entered the temple, they demanded that I should do likewise. I refused to do so. 'There is God in this temple', I said. 'I shall be insulting Him if I approach Him in that fashion, naked and slavish. It is unshastric, I will never do that'. Hearing me they kept silent; there was no more protest.

If you profess orthodoxy, be sincerely orthodox; follow the Shastras and Sishtachara, but not inhuman and unshastric customs and manners.

January, 1937.

The next day the disciple went to the Ashrama in the evening. Swamiji was giving lessons and training the children and also some grown up men in physical culture. He was helping them to perform feats in parallel bars etc.

While thus engaged he said : ' My hope is in these girls. They appreciate and care for instructions much better than boys.

The exercises over, the disciple approached Swamiji to take leave.

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S. You are hurrying to go ? There is good moonlight. Perhaps it is time for your supper. That is another curious thing.

The great curse.

Only Rakshasas take supper at this hour. They spend the day time in hunting wild beasts, and they get tired. As soon as they return, they must have their meals. The twentyfour hours of the day are divided into eight Praharas. The fisrt Prahara after sunset is devoted by Devas or Brahmins or others who have Daivee Sampat to Sandhyavandana, Japa, Dhyana and other religious practices. But you are neither Devas nor Brahmins, nor have you Daviee Sampat (Divine qualities). You have been cursed by Sankaracharya. You are Sapa-grastas. You, Nambudiris outcasted him. Don't you know that. My goodness ! You stare at me as if you are just dropped from heaven and know nothing of this wonderful world ! Well, then, hear this. You, the hard-hearted, irreligious Nambudiris had the audacity to say that the great Sankaracharya was a Vidhava-putra (the son of a widow) and you placed him outside the pale of your caste, you outcasted him ! When his venerable mother died, no Nambudiri went to help him to cremate her body. So he had to do it all himself. He cut off the limbs of the body and carried them part by part and cremated them. Only a Marar helped him. Don't you see how much the Nambudiris have fallen down from their original status. They are still going down and down, and, mark my words they will go to the lowest depths of degradation. Now you drive away the untouchables, shouting, 'You parias get away, run away, you rascals'. A day will come, and it is not far distant, when you, in your turn, will be driven off and shouted at by the Paria , 'You Nambudiri, get away !' They will kick you out of the face of the earth. That reaction is sure to come. How will you escape the inevitable retribution ?

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D. Is there no way out, no Sapamoksha?

S. Yes, there is.

The way out, Sapamoksha —Heroism.

D. What may it be?

S. By becoming heroes, Veeras, the opposite of being Bheerus, cowards.

D. Kindly make it a little more plain.

S. Have you forgotten all that I told you last evening. You did not understand any thing, perhaps?

D. No, Swamiji, I have not forgotten, I remember everything very clearly and now I understand that the way is to be kind and generous to the poor and down-trodden classes.

S. Very good! To be a hero means to be kind and generous! How can you show kindness to them? Rather, they will take pity on you and show kindness and generosity towards you, seeing that you are going down and down.

What did Krishna mean by asking Arjuna to be a hero? To be kind and generous! You cannot understand anything. A coward will never understand what it is to be a hero.

January, 1937.

In the evening Swamiji was in the open gymnasium with the children. The moon had risen, but the light was not clear. A gentleman came up with the plaintive words, "Swamiji, save me" and fell at his feet. Swamiji looked closely and recognised him.

S. Oh, is it Mr. N—. What is the matter with you?

N. Swamiji, I am suffering and suffering. I cannot concentrate my mind.

S. But why should you concentrate? Take things easily. Don't force your mind.

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N. My mind is restless. I cannot do anything.

S. You need not do anything. Don't think at all.

N. My work (as a Vakil) suffers, I cannot earn my living and spport my family.

S. Such troubles are incidental to life. The world is an ocean, 'Samsarasamudram'. Ups and downs are inevitable. What is your age?

N. I am above fifty.

S. Well, you know these fifty years God provided you with food; He did not make you starve. Is not fifty years' experience enough to convince you of His protecting grace and power? Who gave you food all these years? God or yourself? The experience you have gathered during this long period has made you disbelieve in God's mercy?

N. I wonder how diabetes affects the brain!

S. Yes, it affects the brain as well. In your present bodily condition, don't try to concentrate or force your mind. Leave the matter to God. Resign yourself to Him. "Come ye, that are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest" said Christ. Krishna also said the same thing. 'Mamekam Saranam Vraja' Take refuge in Me alone. For everything, to solve any problem, to overcome any difficulty, go to Him, but not to Bhutas and Pretas. Get acquainted with the Police Commissioner, all the Police Force will salute you. So be a devotee of Bhagavan and none will dare to injure you. But your people have greater faith in Bhutas and Pretas than in God. They will have Tilahomam and other rites performed with great zeal, but they have very little enthusiasm in worshipping God. So, Mr. N.—be calm, have faith in God.

N. Swamiji should bless me.

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S. I am always praying for your welfare. You too should try to do so. I myself have been diabetic for the last twenty or thirty years. I don't bother my head about it. Be calm and have faith in Bhagavan.

January, 1937.

Today is Swamiji's birthday. The disciple could go to him in the evening only. In the course of conversation with devotees Swamiji said: "Poor Mr. N.—has some family trouble. He is worrying himself unnecessarily. Perhaps he is a little touched in the brain. Sanity is the great blessing of God. It is very difficult to keep the brain cool and poised."

S. (To a devotee) Now, you and your wife can lead a life of retirement. Most of your sons are grown up. They will shoulder the family burden. You can live in peace. Giving up all anxiety, you can devote your whole time to higher thoughts. For P—also it is time to retire, to be a Vānaprastha. These Ashramas are meant for that—for affording facility to those who have a mind to lead a retired life. But very few want it. Only through great good fortune, one feels inclined that way. Haven't you heard of one of our brothers Gopal Dada (Swami Advaitananda)? Dada means an elder brother. He was very old and entangled in family ties. But there was some Poorvapunyam (merits acquired in previous births) which led him to Bhagavan in his last days That saved him. (He became Swami Advaitananda).

16th Makaram, 1112.

The disciple could not go to the Ashrama for three days. Seeing him today Swamiji kindly enquired: 'What Mr. Nambudiripad, you did not come for the last so many days. You were a regular visitor. What was the matter, were you unwell?'

D. Yes, Swamiji, I was not well.

S. I thought as much. (There were repairs going on. Showing them to the disciple Swamiji said): See,

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these shelves have been all enlarged, widened. They can now contain the sewing machine, the clock, the harmonium and other things.

Whenever I come here I make some changes somewhere. I cannot sit idle. Something in me makes me do some work or other always and never allows me to sit quiet.

S. (To Mr. V. K. who had come by that time) Madhavan (Mr V. K's son) saw me at the Seth's, smoking cigars. The next day, he brought me a box of cigars as if I was in need of them. I was living in a very rich hause and my hosts were supplying me with costly things. Madhavan has not yet begun to earn and he is living in a strange place, not in his native place. I took him to task for spending money unnecessarily. I knew he did it out of love and respect for me. But he should be more economical and earn something first. After accumulating a little, he can be generous and make charity.

17th Makaram, 1112.

A teacher thrown out of employment has come to see Swamiji.

T. I am a family man and have to seek some job.

S. Even otherwise, it is not good to remain without some kind of work. And you are young, you must do some work.

I want a woman teacher for our Girls' School. The Ashrama is poor and cannot afford to pay her any salary. She can reside here permanently and teach and look after the girls. Any educated lady without family ties and philanthropically-minded will be welcome.

T. It is very difficult to get that sort of mistress.

S. No, no, not so very difficult. Don't you know, the Harijan uplift movement has made people more interested in humanitarian services. So many have taken

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to such works as educating the Panchamas, improving sanitary conditions etc. I can get any number of them from Bengal. But that won't do. We want Malayali teachers to teach Malabar girls. Our school will not follow the Government carriculam. I don't want our girls to be educated that way. I have experience of University women teachers who are practically good for nothing. They don't know how to keep a house, how to cook a meal and how to bring up children—well-dressed, worthless mistresses. We want our girls to be so trained as to be able to help themselves, to be of use to themselves, their homes and their country. They must grow strong and healthy. It is not much literary education that they want. Elementary education with some knowledge of English, Sanskrit, home science, physical culture; this is what we wish them to have. I know lady graduates, thin and emaciated, with lifeless looks, wearing spectacles, too weak and unaccustomed to do any physical work. They get married, and after the first delivery contract some disease. And their offspring will be no better off. I could have congratulated them if they had a little Vairagya. But that they have not. They are strongly attached to sense objects. Yet, the poor beings have not the capacity to enjoy life to the full. Health is one of the greatest blessings of God. What can the weak do? Neither for this world, nor for the next are they fit. People like our friend here (Swamiji points to the disciple) who neglected health in their younger days and are now suffering in consequence will be ruined if they marry. Weak, unhealthy men and women will do well to abstain from marriage.

(The disciple was surprised that he got an answer to the question he had in his mind).

19th Makaram, 1112.

The Prince of—Has arrived.

S. (To the Prince) How are you, keeping all right?

P. Yes, Swamiji.

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S. (Pointing to some bundles and tins) What are these?

P. Some fruits, biscuits and other things.

S. The fruits may be offered tomorrow. The other things, biscuits, are to be taken to my room. Tell them so—otherwise they will offer those things also to Bhagavan. They don't know which may and which may not be offered.

P. Did not Bhagavan take biscuits?

S. No, how could He? His stomach was so weak. His diet was very sparse. He could not digest new rice. In Bengal, paddy is kept for nine or ten years. Ayurvedic physicians prescribe the rice of such paddy for Grihani patients. Bhagavan used to take rice three or four years old, only a bit of it that came as Prasad from the temple.

One spoonful was enough for Him. Devotees would bring plantain and other fruits, sugar-candy etc. He could eat half a plantain fruit, and of grapes, but one or two. Biscuits were out of the question. His body was so delicate that a hard Poori cut His fingers when He tried to break it. With that tender and delicate body He practised hard tapasya for twevle years.

20th Makaram, 1112.

The birthday of Swami Vivekananda is being celebrated today. There are many visitors and devotees present. In the evening Swamiji said: 'That teacher from Palghat is well-read in philosophy. Call him. We shall have some talk. This is the birthday of one who is believed to be the incarnation of Shiva'. The teacher was called in.

T. These Moorthis, Rama, Krishna, Shiva, etc., are they Iswaras?

S. Yes, They are.

T. Are they not merely our readings of Iswara?

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S. Certainly. What else can they be? Iswara Himself is our reading of the Absolute. And our readings vary. Suppose a child is taught about Christ. He will have a conception of Christ. But the Patiri (a priest) who teaches him will have a different conception of Him. Though different from each other in many particulars, both are true.

T. How can mere mental readings be real?

S. Why not? They are relatively, not absolutely, real.

T. Now, the Gopis had the highest sort of love for Krishna.

S. (Interrupting) I am not a Gopi—I know only my conception of Krishna. My idea will not be the same as yours. Again the same individual will not have the same but different conceptions in different stages of life. Don't bring in individuals. Try to be logical. It is very bifficult to get an analytical mind.

T. Have the visions which the devotees get any spiritual value?

S. They have. They indicate the progress of the Sadhakas. But they are not the be-all and end-all of spirituality. One should not stop there.

T. If they are only relatively real, is it not better to take up Jnanayoga instead of Bhaktiyoga.

S. No, never. Through the concrete alone lies the path to the abstract. How can a boy who knows not addition and subtraction learn higher mathematics? It is true that a few exceptional persons take up Jnanayoga from the very start. They have done with the preliminaries in previous births.

T. Let me ask one more question. Do the Buddhists believe in Incarnation?

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S. No, Buddhist philosophy does not believe in it. It does not admit incarnation or re-incarnation. The Hindu philosophy too does not admit them. The final conclusion of the Vedanta is that the soul neither comes nor goes, neither dies, nor is born.

T. But Swami Vivekananda has spoken of re-incarnation as evolution.

S. In all evolution or re-incarnation there must be a continuing substratum, an unchanging common factor, on which the changes appear. According to the western theory of evolution, a fish changes into a flying fish, that again into a bird, and then into an animal, and so on. There is nothing identical in all these evolved bodies. According to the Hindus, there is the soul which is the same in all these various changes. But the Buddhists do not believe in such an undying soul. Their conception is that the soul is Kshanika, momentary, dying and being created every minute. There is no continuous underlying substance to re-incarnate. Re-incarnation presupposes a fixed basic substance, an arena for the scenes of birth and death. The Buddhists deny the existence of such an immutable something on which changes appear.

Why bother ourselves with such abstruse philosophy?

T. It is a good intellectual exercise.

S. Oh! we don't want intellectual gymnastics. You are a teacher and you should therefore have your intellect sharpened like a razor. But we are poor men. Our brains are too weak to grasp those tough subjects. We only know how to play with children. Now make arrangement for Harikatha.

So saying Swamiji left the seat and went in. After a while Swamiji came out with a baby in his arms. He was playing with and fondling the tiny thing.

After Arati, the disciple approached Swamiji to take leave.

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S. Are you going? Why can't you stay here? Other orthodox people take Prasad here. Here is the orthodox Prince. There is the orthodox Nambudiri from Pudukad. They take food here and why can't you do so? You will be outcasted. Will they outcaste the Pudukad gentleman?

D. No. His people may not know it at all. But my people are close by and are keeping strict watch over me.

S. No, no, it is all cowardice.

D. May I ask a favour of Swamiji?

S. Well, what is that?

D. My father has asked me to invite the Prince to our house.

S. How can your father invite him to your house?—The Prince has lost his caste by taking Bhagavan's Prasad! Yet he is a Prince! Then, why can't he come here himself, pay his respects to the Prince and then invite him? We took the trouble of bringing him over here and your father wants to take the benefit of it. No expense, no trouble. Simply send word, and when the Prince goes, entertain him with your Kalan and Olan (curries) and go about boasting, the Prince was our guest! Tell him he is my guest. Let your father go to the Prince's palace if he wants to invite him.

D. My father will get angry with me if I say so.

S. Not at all. It is my word. You are simply to translate it. You are innocent, you have no hand in the matter.

21st Makaram, 1112.

When the disciple went to the Ashrama the next day, Swamiji asked him: 'Did you report my words to your father?'

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D. No.

S. I knew you would not. Did I not explain to you that you would not be guilty by simply translating my words?

D. Then my father may get angry with Swamiji.

S. Oh! He might send away Swamiji from the Ashrama!

D. Not that. I shall have to suffer by incurring his displeasure.

S. That is your self-interest. Did you not hear that Mr. V. K's son, Madhavan, has fearlessly and frankly written to his father that I scolded him for bringing me a cigarette box purchased out of what little he gets from his father. Madhavan boldly confessed, and did his father get irritated?

D. My father has not that regard for Swamiji which Mr. V. K. has.

S. You have no love for your father!

D. I do love him.

S. No, you do not. You are afraid of him. How can fear and love, two diametrically opposed qualities, exist side by side? Where there is love, there is no fear, but only reverence and awe. Look at these girls. How free they are with me! They feel pleasure in my presence and they are afraid to do anything wrong. I train them to eradicate the very sense of fear from their minds. They should be taught from this tender age. In you people, it has become deep-rooted. The elders punish the young ones for every little fault and have made themselves a perpetual terror. It is heroism that should be taught, not weakness.

Look at these girls, again, sitting before me and meditating. One is a Nambudiri girl. another a Nair, the third a Tiyya—children of all castes and classes

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sitting side by side. They have mutual friendly feelings. Seeds of culture are sown in their tender minds. They are the mothers of the future generation. You see, the home is the temple of religion.

To the Christians, the Church is everything. To see God, they have to go there, on Sunday, not on other days, when God is supposed to be taking rest and not receiving visitors. But no Hindu has to go to a temple to see God. Every Hindu-home is a temple; it has a shrine where God is daily worshipped. The Gita says "Sucheenam Sreematham gehe" (in the house of pure and liberal souls). Here, too, a pure house is mentioned as the fitting environment for spiritual advancement, not a temple.

But, now no Hindu home has any substantial religion in it. It is a nest of lifeless bones of all kinds of superstitions and cowardice; religion is but an outer covering of convention, forms and rituals. No warmth of feeling—just as your coming here, making sashtanga pranams and showing great Gurubhakti. Form matters little—the heart must feel. Look at the Europeans, the Englishmen. How bold and open in their behaviour they are! It comes as a result of training.

13th Kumbhom, 1112.

Mr. Tampan and others have come to the Ashrama, to request Swamiji to unveil the portrait of Sri Ramakrishna in the Ottapalam High School.

A visitor:—Do you not go to Calcutta to attend the Religious Parliament?

S. That is a meeting of the householders. I have nothing to do with it.

V. Have not the Ramakrishna-Sanyasins some hand in all these movements?

S. Ramakrishna is a universal figure. He cannot be claimed exclusively by His devotees and disciples.

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Every man, every nation, has a right to celebrate His birthday and to worship Him. It is not right to think that all the celebrations in His name all over the world are the work of the Ramakrishna-Sanyasins or that they should take part in all of them. Rama was born in Ayodhya. Yet Malayalees celebrate Rama-navami in Malabar. Can the Ayodhya people claim it as their own, or are they bound to attend it? Rama is a universal figure, He belongs to the whole world. God is not the private property of any sect or individul: He is everybody's or nobody's. So is Ramakrishna. He was neither a Hindu, nor a Christian nor a Muhommedan. He was all of them. He was against creating any sect or creed. Has God any particular religion? God is God. The form which you see in the picture of Bhagavan is only a vehicle which conveys and radiates the concentrated, dazzling light called Ramakrishna. You have seen the pipe-water system. You may think that the pipe and tap in your house are your own. But really it is part of the system and goes with the water reservoir. Similarly the various forms and ideals, all belong to the spiritual system and go with God. God has no religion or caste or colour. It is man that makes such distinctions as a Paria's God, a Nambudiri's God and so on. Uncle moon, Bhagavan used to say, is the uncle of all.

V. Have all the disciples of Ramakrishna got God-realisation?

S. How can I know that?

V. Yet, so far as your opinion is concerned?

S. My opinion is the impression that my mind has formed. It may not be true and corresponding to facts. You alone can know what your real mental state is. People may say of a man that he is a great Yogi and lives upon one Katukka (gall-nut) a day. But the man alone knows if he is a real Yogi or a downright hypocrit.

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V. Paramahamsa at least had realised God.

S. Paramahamsa not only realised God, but gave realisation to others. He was a spiritual laboratory where God was demonstrated before our very eyes. He was the living God. He did not talk about religion, He lived it.

Later, unveiling the portrait Swamiji said: "Ramakrishna, by Himself is like water, having no colour or form. He takes different forms by entering into vessels of different kinds. He is an International figure. His message is being understood and appreciated not only in India or by theists alone, but all over the globe, by rank materialists, and western rationalists as well. He cannot be monopolised by Indians or Hindus, still less by the Ramakrishna Mission. The various celebrations and the enthusiasm evinced in them are not those of the Ramakrishna Mission or movement. It is the peoples'. The whole universe has to be in transport of joy on the occasion of Ramakrishna celebrations. Because the spiritual brilliance of Ramakrishna will penetrate into the darkest and most obscure corners of the world, and every individual, whatever be his caste, colour or creed will be electrified by that dynamic force. It is no wonder that He has touched you too and you have been prompted to arrange this pleasant function".

Notes recorded and published in the Malayalam monthly, Vivekavani, by Mr. P. Govinda Menon, B. A., (Editor).

Place: Niranjan Ashrama, Ottapalam.

Date: 5th March, 1939.

It was on Friday the 5th of March 1938 last, the 103rd birthday of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, that I had the good fortune to meet Swami Nirmalanandaji at the Ramakrishna-Niranjnan Ashrama, Ottapalam. The substance of the conversation held that day is

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given below in the belief that it will benefit the general public. It is impossible to convey to the reader any idea of the great power which was revealed in his words, flowing like a torrent, pure and clear. His sweet and hearty laughter, the lustre that shot out of his eyes and the majesty that enveloped him were an irresistable attraction to all.

Q. What was the colour of Sri Ramakrishna's person?

S. I can't say definitely. His colour varied with His mood. He looked different at different times. You must have noticed difference in shades of colour in the case of all. A man is gay and cheerful, his skin is then somewhat bright. The same man is moody and despondent, his complexion then is rather dark. Bhagavan's moods were immeasurably deep and strangely varied. The change in colour was therefore very patent. I may generally say that His complexion was fair, not drak.

Q. God's grace is said to be unconditioned, and the law of Karma inexorable. How can the two be reconciled. One man performs Sadhana for years, yet he has no realisation; another man gets it very easily. How is it?

S. You want to measure God by human standards! How, then, is God superior to man? He is beyond human minds and cannot be measured by human standards. That is why we say, His mercy is unconditioned. But, cause must bring the sure effect; we cannot say, when? Actions, externally the same, may greatly differ internally on account of the mental condition of the doer, the motives behind them and many other factors. The results must therefore differ and so also the times of their fruition. But, sooner or later, the effect must follow the cause. With that firm faith, man must ever engage himself in good action.

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Q. Are repetition of Mantram and meditation alone sufficient for spiritual progress?

S. They are, indeed helpful. But purity is essential.

Q. Is a guru indispensable?

S. Practise sincerely. The path will be clear somehow or other. The field must be well tilled and prepared before the seed can be sown. The seed may be good, but if the soil is bad, the crop will be poor.

Q. Is not man powerless? Are not all in God?

S. God has given man the power of discrimination. It is for him to use it properly. It is not the fault of God that a man running after vice gets a bad kick. Man is given freedom with a certain limit. A cow is tied to a peg with a rope. The length of the rope is its range of freedom. Man is endowed with the power to discriminate between good and evil. The use or abuse of that power lies with himself.

Q. Where do the Mahapurushas go after death?

S. They go to the world of their choice and remain there doing good to the world. They can remain in Samadhi also. Doing good to the world does not bind them. The Saptarshis are the same for the period of one Kalpa. At the end of the Kalpa thay are liberated and they become one with Brahma.

Q. What is the true form of God on which to meditate? Rama, Krishna and other Gods are pictured in various forms.

S. There is an element of truth in every picture. As the mind becomes pure and concentrated the true form will present itself. The Maharshis have actually seen those forms. In the beginning you have to use your imagination.

Q. What are the signs of a Sadhaka's spiritual progress?

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S. The more a man progresses, the more will he have mental peace, cheerfulness and other qualities. That is the test. Persevere without despair. The result is sure to follow.

In the course of a talk, the next morning Swamiji said :—India is steeped in Tamas, the people are so indolent and inert. More so are the Malayalees. So many of them are prepared to do any menial service to fill their stomachs. If they have just enough to eat, how proud they become! They are too big to work. For simple personal service they want an army of servants. A Nambudiri or Yajaman (a master) cannot go out without a servant to carry his Chellam (box for keeping betal leaf, arecanut, tobacco etc.); the betal leaf must be prepared, the nut and tobacco cut into pieces and these put into his hands by his servant. To do these things himself is most demeaning! What false pride! What dependence! People who should be great workers, heroes, to be so dependent and good for nothing!

There was a Nawab in Bengal, one of those vainglorious boobies living on the Malikhana paid by the East India Company. Having nothing else to do, he was playing chess with a friend. Just then went a maid, came running to him and crying that his house was on fire. It took some time for him to be appraised of the news. He scolded the maid for her intrusion, called in his valets to attire him properly and finally emerged and walked on in pompous gait. By the time he reached the place, there was no house, but only a heap of ashes!

Tulsidas says "Tomorrow's work must be done today, and today's, this very instant". Our people, however, have made it a rule to postpone everything to some other time even unto the next life.

I believe in American religion—activity and promptness. Time is not for being wasted. Whatever there

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is to be done ought to be done without a moment's delay. This false pride and indolence and procrastination will never take us out of our slavery.

We follow Christ's advice to show the left cheek when we are smitten on the right. But it is cowardice that makes us do so. Our religion is what the Gita teaches, to fight with all our might when we are attacked, not to take the blow lying down. Look at our Gods and Goddesses! Every one of them has one or more weapons. Even the Lord of Tyagis, the meditative God Shiva, has a trident in his hand. Rama and Lakshmana go to the forest with bows and arrows and other weapons. That typifies heroism in action, righteous fight. "Slain, you reach heaven, victorious, you get empire over the earth", sayas Krishna to Arjuna. Was it 'Ahimsa' that he taught? You take to your heels at the sight of the enemy and call it Ahimsa! It is cowardice with a religious cloak, that is what it is. If you want to rise, if you want to be free, you must become strong and active and cut your bonds. Vanquish your enemies, be a terror to them!

Once Bhagavan was travelling to Kamarpukur from Calcutta in a country cart with samans. The road lay through a vast expanse of fields. There was no habitation within reach or sight on either side. When the cart had reached the middle of the fields there appeared some robbers. As they neared the cart, the cartman ran away. Sri Gurumaharaj was alone. Nothing daunted, and roaring Jai Kali, He sprang out of the cart and rushed at the robbers. His roar, His courage and His conquering attitude terrified the robbers who ran away for their very lives. Bhagavan simply hissed, He did not want to bite. Boldness you must have. Have you not heard that the Holy Mother had a 'robber father'? Shake off all cowardice and manifest your strength. You are really strong. You don't know that. You think you are weak and you are lazy and indolent. It is high time

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that you shook off the lethargy and entered the battle-field of self-conquest.

It was on the 5th of March that, by these inspiring words he infused strength and courage into the hearts of his hearers. At the close of the talk, he said "I may give up the body shortly, at any time, who knows?" It was on the 26th of April following that he entered Mahasamadhi!

Stray Talks.

When asked why some persons living in the company of great souls make no religious progress, Swamiji said: "Because they have no receptive minds and no humility of spirit. Self-satisfied and conceited, they think they know all that is necessary for them to know. They are like water-pots immersed in water upside down. One must have the desire to know and be of humble spirit. The Gita says:

"Sraddhavan labhate jnanam tatparah samyatendriyah". And again: "Tad viddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya. Upadekshyamti te jnanam jnaninah tatwa darsinah"

(Moved by your devotion and service, the wise will impart knowledge to you in answer to your questions)."

When asked about the meaning of a Mantra, he explained it and continued: "Do not go away with the idea that you have learnt the whole purport of the Mantra. These Mantras are the fruits of very hard tapas and supreme realisation of our great Rishis. The meaning of every one of them is very deep. Go on with Japam as taught by your Guru with great regularity and devotion. More and more of the meaning will be revealed to you as you progress."

A Brahmin boy expressed desire to get initiation from Swami Brahmanandaji Maharaj. "You are a Brahmin' said Swamiji, "You are already initiated. Can any Mantra be holier and more potent than the Gayatri

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which you have received? Have faith in it and repeat it with devotion. In course of time, the Lord will reveal Himself to you and you will be blessed by Him".

To a gentleman in service who thought of becoming a Sanyasin after retirement he said: "The best part of your life you have given to woman and gold. Still you wish to give some more of it to them. Then, in the end, what will you have to give to God? Any good resolution must be put into effect at once. "Yadahareva virajet tadahareva pravrajet". (Renounce the world the very day you find it insipid).

To some professed adherents of Acharas he said: "You say your Acharas should be respected. You go any length for your advancement in the world. You send your children to Europe and America for higher education. Then, no question of Achara stands in your way. This shows that you are not at all sincere. Since you yourselves throw it to the winds at your will and pleasure, how can you expect others to respect it. This lack of sincerity and Sraddha is our bane".

Speaking about the problem of popular education Swamiji said: "The ancient Burmese had a system which solved the problem very easily. With them, the monasteries were the schools and the monks the teachers. A rich Buddhist thinks it a meritorious act to build a monastery. To feed the monks was a simple matter. With begging bowl in hand the Sramanas, as the Buddhist monks were called, would stand before a house for a few moments without uttering a word and would go away if no one paid any attention to them. But that would hardly happen, for it was considered very inauspicious if a monk left the house without food. When a child reaches the age of education, it is sent to a monastery under the care of the monks. It partakes of the monks' simple meals, lives their life and imbibes their knowledge, culture and religion. Sound education and healthy living without spending a single pie! Donations or gifts are made to the Ashrama on all ceremonial occasions such as birth,

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marriage etc., in all households. The monks officiate as priests, but receive no fees."

About some inmates of the Ashramas he said: 'They are sentimental. They do not achieve anything, but fritter away their energy in vain. They imagine that a particular place is congenial for their Sadhana, go there and are charmed with it. They write ecstatically about it to their friends and invite them to go over there. But very soon the place loses its novelty and charm for them; they go to some other place, and in no time become disgusted with that also. Thus they go through life like rolling stones. What is wanted is steadiness. Stick to an Ashrama, attend diligently to the works prescribed for you by the authorities and pursue your Sadhana with devotion. Whatever be the work, it should be done as the worship of Sri Gurumaharaj. Is God a jack fruit for you to pluck? Be pure and sincere. He looks to your mind. By His grace alone one can realise Him.'

To the Amildar of Shimoga the Swami said: "Temper, thoughts and habits, can all be changed. Every evil can be rooted out by practising its opposite. As a boy I myself was a bit timid. But I desired to become bold and fearless. So I frequented burial grounds and got over that weakness. We can all become good and devoted to God if we desire it strongly and pursue the necessary course of practice with firm determination.

" One should never be indifferent in any matter, however small or trivial it may seem. Sri Gurumaharaj took Swamis Brahmananda and Yogananda to task for their indifference in certain matters. Once, when Gurumaharaj was about to sit down for His meals, He could not touch the seat. When questioned about it, Rakhal Maharaj said that it was arranged by a yong disciple of Nityagopal. Gurumaharaj scolded him for his indifference and asked it to be purified and re-arranged. He could not suffer any touch or look which was impure ".

About educational institutions run by Christian Missionaries the Swami said: "It is not advisable to send

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Hindu girls to such institutions. Their ultimate aim is to convert all to their own religion—very laudable in their eyes. They therefore try all means to wean them away from our fold. Slowly, silently and effectively they do it. They will show the girls great love and solicitude for their welfare, give them all sorts of concessions and help them in various ways. They will not be asked even to attend Church. But gradually they will be Christianised. I have had experience of this, both in America and in India. It is not therefore safe to put our girls under Christian Sisters, Mothers or Nuns."

In answer to a question about the advisability of embracing Buddhism, Swamiji said: "Hinduism contains eveything of value in Buddhism; and at the same time supplies a personal God. The belief in the existence of a personal God is a constitutional necessity of normal humanity. Later-Buddhism illegitimately supplied that want by making Buddha Himself God. So, for a Hindu there is no advantage to be derived from becoming a Buddhist".

When asked about the initiation etc., by Babu Krishna Chandra Dutta of Chappra, Swamiji said: "By initiation, the Guru kindles the light of spirituality that comes down from a great spiritual Incarnation. The duty of the disciple is to keep that light burning by his efforts of faith and Sadhana. If he does so, the current will carry him on to the goal". Asked as to how to make Sadhana, he said: "Fix up some periods every day and practise your Sadhana strictly and regularly. But, all through the twentyfour hours, keep the memory of the Lord. Even when you are engaged in works, repeat the name ot the Lord and go on with your work. Be a mere instrument of the Lord always. Surrender yourself completely at His feet. This kind of attitude of the mind and the life will lead you to God".

On the life of Swami Vivekananda the Swami said: "In these days when patriotic workers for the welfare of India are required in enormous numbers, there is no

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greater soul than the late Swami Vivekananda whose life can be set up as an ideal for honest workers. He was the first Sanyasin to break the barriers of the inveterate exclussiveness of the Hindus, to cross the seas and to hold aloft to the outside world the torch-light of the teachings of the Vedanta philosophy, and it was he who raised in a great measure the status of India and its civilization in the eyes of the westerners. Any one who has even a superficial idea of his life and work can realize how ardent a patriot the Swami was and how every throb of his heart was for the uplifting of the masses."

Referring to Max Muller's Life of Sri Ramakrishna Swamiji said: "It is a mere comparative studay. The Kathamrita (Gospel) contains only one aspect of Sri Gurumaharaj and a few fragrants of His teaching. The revered writer was a School Master. He could go to Sri Gurumaharaj only during Holidays. Whatever he heard on those days he recorded. He had no opportunity to see Bhagavan in all His various Bhavas. The Leelaprasanga of Swami Saradananda is the most comprehensive work on the subject. The Swami, like the other Tyagi disciples of the Master, stayed with Him day and night, for months together and had the unique privilege of witnessing and studying the manifold Bhavas of the Monarch of Bhavarajya.

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SWAMI NIRMALANANDA

HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS

PART III.

LECTURES

The Human Soul

(A lecture delivered by the Swamiji before the 6th convention of the Sadhu Sanga Mahasabha, Kurukuthurai, Tinnevelly.)

Adapted from 'the Kalpaka' and published in the Prabuddha Bharata of August 1909—page 174.

Before we try to understand the individual soul that dwells within every human heart, let us first understand what our individual mind is. The study of the mind is very beneficial, and is the most interesting of all other studies in the world. In fact, the study of mind comprises the study of all branches of knowledge, of sciences, secular and spiritual. In fact, when we try to understand certain sciences, for instance, Astronomy, Logic, Philosophy, Metaphysics etc., we find they are the whisperings of the mind. Is it not the mind that conceived all these sciences in the world? So let us understand what this mind is. Mind has two powers; one is the efferent and the other the afferent. Cycling inward is Nivrithi; cycling outward is Pravrithi. The worldly sciences are the outcome of Pravrithi; Philosophy, Metaphysics, Psychology and other sciences of an introspective nature are of Nivrithi. Now what is that force behind the mind that guides

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people to understand things? Mind itself cannot conceive anything unless there is some force behind it.

In our Vedas we find that all the forces that are manifested in the Universe have their birth, as it were, from one force or energy, called in Sanskrit the Prana. That is the sum-total of all the forces displayed in the Universe. The power of Attraction, Cohesion, Repulsion, are nothing but the manifestation of that one power which is called Prana. Prana is the mother-energy from which all the other various manifestations of forces come out. According to modern science, a science has reached its culmination when it has found the one underlying unit from which all variety has proceeded, and according to the Hindu Shastras, that unit has been found out in the Prana. As it is the Prana that acts behind the mind, which produces the different sciences and branches of knowledge, the Cosmic Prana comprises all the Universe with the diverse variety of forms.

Now, before we try to understand this mind, let us see what our modern philosophers say about it, whether they admit the existence of something behind it or not. If brain explained everything, where is the necessity to admit the existence of another thing behind it? They say, brain is the centre from which all senses arise. For instance, to give a concrete example: How do I know there is a light? First, the nerves of the eyes are affected, and the power of discrimination comes and tries to analyse what it is, and compares it with the sensations pegeon-holed in the brain. From that reflexive power of the brain we know it is light. Similarly, I am standing here and I hear some sounds. The vibrations reach the nerves, the nerves affect the brain, and I hear. That is what the physiologists say. But the brain by itself cannot act. Suppose, the picture of yours is on my retina and I am thinking of something else, if you take a picture of the retina, the picture will be there, but still I do not see you. I am talking intently

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to you ; my mind is grossly absorbed in it. Some music is going on near. I do not hear that. The sound vibrations came, struck the tympanum, and the sensation was carried to the brain centre, but still I do not hear; why ?—because my mind is not touched. Then there must be a mind behind the brain. We need one factor besides the brain, namely, the mind. The external organs of touch and smell—the dual organs—are Indriyas, and they have their nerves there. We may have a beautiful eye, still we will not see anything if the internal nerve is useless. If the brain centre is not right, then also we cannot hear. The external organs may be perfect, the brain and sense nerve may be perfect, but if there is no mind, we cannot have the perception of the sense. Now, here we shall have to understand that all these perceptions are impressed on the brain, but there is another factor needed to have these grouped. Mind is constantly changing. We do not know what mind is. We know of the particular shape the mind is taking. We know the particular nature of the mind and not the whole nature of it. If I am happy the mind has taken the image of happiness, and we know that image only. So we say we are happy. A number of waves move on the ocean of the mind. One wave causes happiness, and another misery. What is this mind ? Mind is compared to a vast lake where ripples are constantly raging; senses are gathering perceptions from outside and generating motions in the lake of the mind, and that creates disturbance. So we are constantly disturbed by the activity of the mind. When we can see the unruffled, the peaceful, the calm equanimity of mind, then we come to know what mind is, and what is beyond the lake of the mind—we can look through what is lying at the bottom. So long as the mind is disturbed by the waves and ripples, we cannot see what is lying behind the mind, so we must know the real state of the mind, and not the form which the mind has taken. The reflection of the Soul is Mind.

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Materialists call mind as matter; the Hindu Shastras deem mind as finer matter, finer tham even ether. It is very fine, subtle matter. On this mind act certain forces which we call Prana, and forces cannot act without any matter. Where there is matter, there is force also; so they are inseparable factors. What is matter? The unity of matter from which all these varieties of matter have come out, is called Akasa. It is not the space. The first form of matter that has come out from that cosmic mind is called Akasa. The solids, liquids and gases can be ultimately reduced to that one unit element known as Akasa, the sum-total of all these different forms of elements. This pure matter or Akasa cannot produce anything, so it requires some force to produce the various things out of it. That is Prana. So in time of Pralaya, all things return to Akasa which is finer than ether, and these different manifestations of forces reduce to one Prana. Therefore it is written in the Vedas, that in the beginning there was one homogeneous mass of matter, there was no colour, no shape, the sum-total of universal energy slept, as it were, on the ocean of matter. It gradually began to vibrate. That vibration of Prana produced these things with diverse names and forms.

So we have seen what mind is, and that brain itself is not enough to prove the facts of human existence. Now, we find mentioned in the Sruti, there is another thing which gives light to the senses and even to the mind. Mind barrows the light from that, and appears intelligent, the mind is made of fine subtle matter which we cannot see with our eyes, or by any of the modern instruments. It is finer than ether. We have also felt that there is a force behind the mind, which force is very fine. It displays itself in different forms. When it manifests through nerves, it is nerve power, when it manifests through muscles, it is known as muscular power. They are one and the same force. Just as one white light, when it breaks through different coloured glasses, appears to be differently

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coloured, so also when Prana appears through different media, it appears as muscular or physical force.

How can we see that which lies behind the mind? Sruti says: "There, these eyes cannot go, words cannot express, thoughts cannot reach, and mind cannot conceive." How shall we be able to say, affirmatively or possitively, it is mind, sense, or brain power? It is beyond them all. If you notice something changing, there must be something unchanging beyond it. What is the steady thing behind the mind? It is the Soul. So Sruti says: "That which cannot be conceived by the mind, but by whose power the mind is able to conceive; that which the ear cannot hear, but by whose power the ear is able to hear; that which cannot be vitalised by this Prana, but by whose power Prana is vitalised,—that underlying principle is Brahman. It is the calm eternal light, self-effulgent, whose light mind is manifesting, whose power physical matter is manifesting." If we understand the real nature of our mind, we shall be able to understand what is behind the mind. This human mind, the individualised principle that is behind the cosmic mind, when transparent (i. e. calm and pure), has a clear grasp of the Divine principle behind. If iron is put in a furnace it becomes red-hot. It will burn anything it comes in contact with, for it has absorbed the heat from the furnace. So it is with the mind. All its intelligence and power really belongs to the Soul which is behind it. It is only the ignorance that is the cause of all misery and happiness. Thinking I am the son of a great Zamindar, a land lord, I become happy. My mind identifies itself with the senses. This identification causes all this misery, trouble and happiness too We become servile, miserable or happy because we think so.

So, when we know the individual mind we know the cosmic mind. Individual mind is a part of the cosmic mind. It is of the same nature. The difference

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lies in degree, and not in kind. A spark or a particle of clay is the same as fire or clay; so when we know this little ego, we know this cosmic ego. Whatever attribute the individual mind possesses, that the cosmic mind possesses also. The only difference is quantitative, and not qualitative.

The Soul is not limited because of the mind, just as the sun is one, though its image may be seen in several pots containing water. When we know I am all, I am the One Individual, Eternal, I am everything, when different forms vanish, and when there is no other perception, when there is one equanimous mind and behind it there is one truth, then we become one with it. There is a story in the Upanishad. Virochana and Indra came to a Rishi for the knowledge of the Self. One was an Asura and the other a Deva. The Rishi told them: 'Thou art God' Virochana, the Asura was quite satisfied to know that he was God, and did not make any further enquiry. Indra went to his Swargam, but he had no calmness of mind. He questioned: "This physical body has its growth and death. It cannot be the Atman. If this body is God, why should I fear that I will be dethroned? This body cannot be the Atman." So he came back to the Rishi and again asked, "What is the Atman." "That Atman you are," said the Rishi, "and from that Atman the whole universe is come! Enquire about that. Make *Tapas* and you will know that." Then he went away and practised meditations and dicided that the principle of life, the vital principle, must be the Brahman. So he came to the Rishi and asked him whether this Prana was not Atman? The Rishi told him to go and perform *Tapas* again. Thus step by step he came to know Pranamaya-kosam, Vijnanamaya-Kosam and Anandamaya-Kosam. At last he came to know, from that Brahman the whole Universe has come out and in that Anandam the whole Universe exists, in that Anandam the whole Universe dissolves at the time of Pralaya, and he was satisfied for he

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realised Truth. Similarly we can say, 'I am Brahman,' when we have realised the Truth. How tiny we make ourselves when we think of the world, and seek fame and influence? How poorly we are by our thinking that I possess so many Acres, I am Iyer, Mudaliar, Iyengar and so forth. I am the son of God. You are the son of God. Therefore the old Upanishadic Rishi, after long concentration coming to realise this being within himself, loudly proclaimed, "I have found, by *Tapas*, that Great Eternal One is beyond darkness and ignorance! Knowing Him also, you will possess, eternal Anandam from which there is no death." Do not limit yourself; you are the Divine Soul. You can at least think you are the son of God. When you think you are conditioned and qualified, you limit yourself. If you think you are the child of God, you are as great as God, just as the spark is as great as the fire itself. So, we come to see that whatever is in this individual self, or what we call in philosophy, microcosm, that exists in the macrocosm. When we know the nature of the microcosm we know the nature of the macrocosm, the one as a part of the other.

We live in an age of materialism; the modern man is given to commercialism, and seeks utility in everything. Of what good is it to know this Atman? We are as happy without it. We earn money. We have children; what good can it bring to us? That is the question always asked. Well, my friends, I tell you there is supreme utility in it. In the first place, knowledge has its own reward, in the second place, with the relative knowledge of mind, see how you are tossed about as fortune smiles or frowns upon you. If fortune smiles you feel happy, if it frowns you feel gloomy and dejected. But when you come to know your own Atman, you will be eternally happy, you will no longer fear anything in this world. If you know this Atman you will not hate anybody, the feeling of hatred will vanish from your heart, and love will dwell therein, this hatred will give place to

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Anandam. It is only by groping in darkness that you weep and cry and think life is a void and vacuum. If you know that wife and child are nothing but Atman and they are the children of God, they are but your own image, they are your own self, then you will conquer all your miseries and ignorance, happiness and bliss will live in your heart all the time. I would pray to God you may know the true nature of the Atman. If you seek happiness, seek that eternal happiness and not the happiness of this world. From the minutest atom to the largest body, everyone is searching for happiness. Why seek for it? That Brahman, that Atman is within you. But we want to manifest it through the senses, and go searching after it, groping after it everywhere except in the Self. We think if we can get a strong body like Ramamurthi, we may be happy, but the body is not permanent. We can be happy only by knowing the Atman. Know that One and that will make you happy.

Vedic Conception of God and Soul.

(*A lecture delivered by the Swamiji in Bangalore.*)

(Prabuddhabharata page 73, April 1910.)

Time rolls on and with it everything else on the plane of the phenomenal—the stars, the moon, the sun, huge systems of the Universe and this planet of ours wherein we live and move and have our being. From the minutest atoms to the largest of heavenly bodies, wherever we turn our eyes, we find that this law of nature governs uniformly. Nothing is stable. Everything is continuously changing, taking different name and form at each step and completing the circute of phenomenal existence, thus reverting again to its origin. Such is the hard and fast law of nature. None escapes it. Looking at this stern law, man stops for a while in awe and asks: 'Is there no way

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out of it'? Does it hold good only in regard to what is but a combination of force and matter, or also in regard to things immaterial? Is the Soul of man also subject to birth, growth and dissolution like his body, or is it something which undergoes no change?

Infiinitesimally small is this sphere of ours when compared to the entire universe and still more so is our individual entity; yet, man shrinks not from asking such questions but pushes hard to reach beyond his limitations, to get a peep behind the veil of this stupendous phenomenon. Ever since man reached the domain of thought and reason, problems of a similar nature have troubled his mind, and he struggled tremendously to attain their solution. So long as man shall continue to think, so long these problems will remain ever new for his individual solution. The yearning will never die out, for it is innate, in his very being. Many centuries back, in occident, these questions were manipulated in a sporadic way by some solitary individuals of great calibre, but since the dawn of the scientific era, when the barriers of theological dogmatism were gradually levelled down, the rationalistic enquiry made its way through the vast arena of unfettered thought, and the search after the reality behind was taken up more generally and with less restraint. From the very misty times of tradition, where the light of history cannot penetrate, India has devoted the best part of her energy to the quest of this truth. Nothing was as near and dear to her heart as this. So, to her, it was of vital consequence, for all her happiness and peace, both here and hereafter, depended solely upon this. It was the very backbone of her existence. And as a result of this arduous and unbroken search after the reality, there is handed down to us a wonderful evolution of rationalistic religion, a perfect concordance of the head and heart, by our sage forefathers of Vedic times.

Religion and philosophy have always been two distinctly different elements in Europe; hence as a

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natural consequence, animosity and conflict sprang up between the two. They remained alienated from and hostile to each other from the very beginning. No ray of the light of reason and philosophy was ever let into the domain of religion. Religion was and still is, in the occident, a mere question of belief. Thus it was inevitable that it should become a dead mass of doctrines and dogmas, deeply burried in the mire of superstition. Hardly can it cope with the present age of enlightenment in every branch of knowledge; what solace then, can such religion bring to the lettered mind? Philosophy, on the otherhand, was equally uncompromising. It refused any help whatever from religion. Indipendantly it tried to force a way, with this limited human intellect, to the realm of Truth. The head never agreed to join with the heart. So, all its efforts were almost fruitless and the result was either rank materialism or agnosticism. By its lack of practicality it failed to bring peace to the mind, nor could it promise any future happiness in a life hereafter. It became a mere intellectual pabulum, a resort for the speculatively-inclimed.

In India religion and philosophy were never at variance. They were hormonious, co-operative, and inseparable factors through the course of their evolution. Both of them originated from the intense yearning of the Rishi of old for the unravelling of Truth from behind phenomena. So great was the yearning of these men that, severing all ties, they repaired into mountain caves and forests and there sank for years into deep contemplation, to solve the problem. Years rolled on; generation after generation passed away in the struggle; but this enthusiasm did never cool down. One generation built upon the experience of the past ones. Rich and poor alike joined in the effort. From the king to the man placed in the lowest valley of life, each contributed his share to the original stock of spiritual knowledge. Thus in the course of many thousand years, a hoard of revelations was amassed,

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and this vast accrescence of divine wisdom is called the Vedas, the ancient scriptures of the Hindus.

Let us now see how the immortal and divine nature of the Soul dawned upon the mind of the Vadic Rishis along with the evolution of the conception of God in His various aspects. The Samhitas are the oldest records of the Vedas. They comprise a vast collection of hymns addressed to different deities, such as Indra, Varuna, Mitra and a host of others. These gods are the rulers of the different celestial realms or swargas. One striking fact we cannot but notice when reading these various hymns—that each of these gods in turn is credited, by his respective votaries, with the supreme qualities of the Lord of the Universe and was looked upon as the God of all gods. Are we to understand then, that the Mantradrashtas of the Samhita period inculcated the worship of and believed in the plurality of gods? Does it follow that the religion of the Samhitas teaches nothing but sheer polytheism? No, the Vedic Rishis did not believe in polytheism. A close study of the hymn portions will convince the reader that therein are scattered, here and there, fishes of highest truth, establishing one underlying unity behind these various divine manifestations. India had out grown fetichism, animism and polytheism, and had arrived at the oneness of existence long before the time when Europe and other parts of the world were being rocked in the cradle of crude belief in a primitive theology. But how came the Rishis to realise this underlying unity out of which all variety proceeds? Their introspection, their metaphysical methods of search after the reality, and above all, their entrance into that higher plane of super-consciousness called Samadhi, made them directly perceive that One Being who is the Lord of the Universe, and that all these various gods are but different manifestations of that One. In confirmation of this statement, let me quote from the very oldest part of the Rig-Veda, a Mantra which boldly declares the unity of existence and which

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disperses the gloom of doubtful suppositions which have gathered around this apparent polytheism of the Vedic Rishis. The Mantra runs thus :—

"Indram mitram varunamagnimahuraddho divyah sa suparnā garutmān !—Ākam sadvipra bahudhā vadantyagnim yamam mātariswānamāhuh."

(Rig Veda 1, 164-46.)

"They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni and the effulgent and nobly-winged Garutman. That which exists is one, sages call it variously, Agni, Yama and Matariswan."

Then again in Yajurveda Aranyaka we read :— "Ākasmān bahudhā vicharah | Satam sukrani yatraikam bhavanti" ॥ (Yajur Aranyaka III-2-4). "He, though one, is regarded as many. All the bright ones become one in Him."

Many a mantra bearing similar import can be cited, but I fear our time will not permit us to do so. One thing we should bear in mind, that is, not to swallow any and everything, indiscriminately, that the western critics tell us with regard to our Vedas. First let us study them closely, then use discrimination to form our own opinion of them. These critics can hardly be expected to have a clear comprehension of the true spirit and meaning of the Vedas, for their very ideas and thoughts are so alien to the ways of Indian thought. Therefore it is no wonder that most of them stumble into blunder in ascribing polytheism and nature worship to the Vedic Rishis. I shall here, allude to one incident, regarding the difficulty of the western mind to comprehend the principles of Indian monotheism, not to mention the pure Advaitism of Vedanta. When the late illustrious Swami Vivekananda was delivering a series of discourses on the religion of the Vedas in London, there was among the audience a very learned and respected lady who attended regularly all the lectures and appeared to be very much

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interested in all that the Swami said. After the completion of the course of lectures, she came one day for an interview with the Swami, and said: "All that you have told us with regard to Hindu religion is simply grand and beautiful, but one thing I did not quite understand and about that I should like to ask you. How is it that you have not mentioned anything about the Devil in your religion? I cannot conceive how can there be a religion without Devil". Thus it seems that to the western mind the Devil is an absolutely necessary factor in constituting a religion, without which no religion worthy the name can possibly exist.

Before coming down to the Upanishadic period, let us first take up those essential features of Vedic monotheism, which make it stand out *alto relievo*, besides other organised monotheistic religions of the world. If we study the history of western religions, we find that in ancient times one God is striving hard to get the supremacy over the other gods, and when he succeeds in occupying the possition of the Supreme Ruler, all the rest are relegated to the depth of oblivion, as happened during the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah, when Jahovah became the sole god of the state. So with the Greak gods, when Zeus assumed the supreme possition. But in India those ancient gods of the Samhitas are still the gods of the Hindus and are even today worshipped by them,as different manifestations of that one and only Being, the Lord of the Universe.

I have alluded above to the evolution of an evil God side by side with the good God in the growth of the religions of the west, of which very strikingly characterises and differentiates them from Hindu monotheism. This rival power is called, in the different religions, Evil, Ahriman, Diabolos and so forth. All that is good, right, generous and wise, is created by the good God and everything that is mentally, morally and physically bad, is created by the evil One. Man is not responsible for his wicked deeds because he is led to them by the latter,

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and also because he is born a sinner. Thus Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and several other faiths, tried to solve the problem of evil by the help of a coexistent evil God. To the Hindu mind the Western idea of Sin and Devil is entirely extraneous and unthinkable and hardly seems a cogent oxplanation of the evil existing in this world. The first thought of the Vedic Seers was to find unity in the variety of expression, the One Existence manifesting Itself in diverse ways and forms. Our joys and sorrows, weal and woe, good and evil, are not two separate entities, but are readings of the different expressions of the same unit factor. They differ from each other, not in kind but in degree. The same phenomenon under different conditions will produce joy and happiness in one and bestow pain and affliction on another. Therefore the coexistence of etenral good and eternal evil as separate entities, as taught by the religions of the west is illogical.

The next fundamental difference that we find In the religions of the west, is in their conception of God. In the west, God is an extra-cosmic being, staying somewhere out-side of the whole universe. He is ruling from there the whole universe, and He can hardly be approached by any mortal, however great and good. So far we have seen that every religion in the west reaches, as it were, its culmination, when it passes from the polytheistic stage to the conception of an anthropomorphic God above, is who is the sole creator and governor of the universe. But such a conception of God was unable to satisfy the minds of the Vedic Sages, because it gave them an idea of God only as builder and architect—the efficient cause of the universe. It did not, for them, go far enough to explain the universe. The objection they raised was that such a God must be limited by the materials and therefore is finite and not indipendant of all. This extra-cosmic Governor, they considered, could at best be only a most powerful moral guide. The raligions of other countries stopped there, satisfied with the idea of an extra-cosmic ruler and did not think of enquiring further. But the

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metaphysical bent of the Aryan Rishis did not allow them to stop there. The intensity of their innate yearning to get at the ultimate reality, made them go still deeper and at last they came to a point where they realised that God is not only extra-cosmic but also intra-cosmic. In and through Him the whole universe exists. He is all-pervading and all-covering. The Sruti says: "Sa avadhastat sa uparishtat sa paschat sa purastat sa dakshinatah sa uttharatah easano bhootabhavyastha sa avadya sa uswah" (Chhandogya VII—25—1.)

'He is below, He is above, He is behind, He is before, He is on the right, He is on the left. The Governor of all that has been and will be. He is the same today as tomorrow".

"Antah pravishtah Sasta jananam sarvatma!"

(Yajur Aranyaka 111—2—4)

'Seated in the heart of all embodied beings, He is the soul, the internal director of all existences'.

Here we see in the Upanishads that God has been realised as immanent in everything. He is not only without, but also within. Whatever has name or form, He is in and through that. Not that he is beyond and cannot be reached. He is the nearest of all that is near to us. He is the very Soul of our being.

Let us now turn to the theory of creation as explained in the Srutis. How came this universe into existence? Who created it? Where did it exist before its creation? Is it created out of nothing or did it exist in some other form, out of which all this has been manufactured? Many questions like these have been asked by the disciples of the Rishis, in the Upanishads. I shall only touch now upon a few salient points in the answers the Rishis give to these questions. In the first place, before we try to understand the Hindu cosmology, we should know that the western idea of the word 'Creation' has very little

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or no significance in the Hindu religion. To speak of, creating something out of nothing is illogical. To create something already existing, will make of God only the efficient cause and as such He is limited by His materials. In either case, we find a God not indipendent or omnipotent. Hence, the Hindu believes not in creation, but in projection. God is not only the efficient but also the material cause. The Upanishads say :—

"Yaddhōrnanābhih drujatē gruhnatē cha
Yaddhā prithivyāmōshadhayah sambhavanti !
Yaddhā satah purushāt kēsalōmāni
Thaddhāksharāt sambhavateeha viswam ॥"

(Mundaka Upanishad, 1—1—7).

"As the spider spreads out and draws in its web, as the plants grow on the earth, as from living man hairs on the head and body spring forth, so does the universe arise from the Indistructible".

Thus we see that according to the Upanishads this universe has been projected out of the Brahman, the absolute Being, the material and efficient cause. It is not that this creation has come out of nothing some six thousand years back, as believed by western theologians. According to the religion of the Vedas, creation is without beginning or end. In the beginning of each Kalpa or Cycle the whole universe arises from God; it is sustained by Him during its phenomenal existence, and in Him it merges again in the end. There was never a time when the universe did not exist, nor will there ever come a time when it will cease to exist.

Now I shall conclude with a few words as regards the nature of the individual Self or the Atman. According to the Upanishads it is uncaused and uncreated. It is immaterial, ever pure, immortal and divine. In

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short it is part and parcel of that universal cosmic Being. We have seen that in the Samhita period the Rishis boldly declared the underlying unity behind the various manifestations of the gods; now, in the Upanishadic period, we find the same unity established not only in gods, but in humanity as well, nay a unity of self with everything in the universe. Thus the Vedic Seer proclaims :—

"Pooshannēkarshē yama sūrya Prājapatya vyūha rashmin samūha ! Tējō yat tē rupam kalyanatamam tathē pasyāmi yōsāvasou purushah sōhamasmi ‖"

"O ! sun, sole traveller of the heavens, controller of all, do thou collect and remove thy phenomenal rays and light, for I wish to behold thy blessed grace. I do not entreat thee like a servant, because the Purusha that dwells in thee is non other but my own self—the Atman."

The Inherent Stength of Hinduism.

(*Summary of the Swamiji's speech at Haripad during his first visit to Kerala in 1911.*)

(Prabuddha Bharata of May 1911, Page 95.)

He began by saying that some western Missionaries were prone to remark that Hinduism, in course of time, would fall into oblivion and that Christianity would swallow it up and that they instanced Druidism--the religion of the ancient forefathers of modern England,—and the ancient religion of the Greaks, in support of their assertion. He contrasted these with the religion of the ancient Rishis and said: "Is not the present Hindu religion as strong as it was of yore? Is not the Hindu religion illumining the depths of the hearts of the mild Hindu the same as of old? Hinduism need not have any fear at the hands of the so-called religious reformers who were springing up in this land of religion like mushrooms. When

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making a comparative study of the different religions, the Swami went on, " we are led to understand that religions generally are built round some person or book. Such religions are bound to fall with that person and that book. Hinduism is neither built round any particular person, nor does it stand upon any book. But it may be asked, who Rama, Krishna, and other Avataras were? The answer is that Rama and Krishna were illustrations of the Principles of our ancient religion and were worshipped only as such. The Hindu religion had been in existence long before these Avataras were born. As for the Veda, it is really no book. It means knowledge. It is accumulated knowledge without beginning or end, and who would think of writing such a book? It is coeval with creation. It is said of Brahman, 'The sword cannot pierce It, fire cannot consume It, water cannot wet It, and the wind cannot dry it.' And the Veda is like that. It is knowledge without beginning or end, undying and eternal".

Swamiji went on to say that this Veda, at a time when there was neither paper nor pen nor any writing materials, remained in the form of Sruti and Smriti which, after a considerable lapse of time, have been embodied in book form. Hinduism further contained one special characteristic which could not be observed in any other religion in the world, namely, that it could satisfy all minds. The most materialistic minds that hungered after action, the minds that having a metaphysical bent, would discord all popular form of worship, would look into the ocean of cause and effect and would only be satisfied by scientific investigation and mental analysis, the minds that would seek an underlying unity in all the diversity in the world, that would see the whole world with its numberless objects as so many manifestations of that Supreme Isvara, the Para-Brahman, or God the Absolute, and the minds that never cared to peep into the inscrutable beyond, but would rather rest content in pondering and concentrating with whole-hearted attention and devotion

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upon God in some personal form,—all these minds whether they followed the several paths of Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Raja Yoga or Bhakti Yoga, would be satisfied only by the Hindu religion. Other religions were only for the Bhakti Yogins. The versatility of the Hindu religion was just the reason why the message of Sri Ramakrishna as preached by his devoted disciple, Swami Vivekananda, found such ready favour and instantaneous effect in the highly advanced and intellectual minds of America and Europe, in whose eyes the teachings of modern Christian Missionaries were but exploded theories in the test of scientific analysis and investigation. Swami Vivekanandaji used to say that the religion in Europe was like a particular kind of coat cut according to one measurement which every man must wear whether it would fit him or not. "But the Hindu religion", the Swami concluded "is so vast that it can take any person with any turn of mind into its fold. It is for this reason only, the Hinduism has stood the test of centuries, and it will do so without doubt to the very end of time".

Sri Ramakrishna.

(*Brief notes of a lecture delivered by Swami Nirmalanandaji in September 1911 during his first visit to Trivandrum.*)

Some years ago there lived a Brahmin of extraordinary piety and devotion in a village in Bengal. Though he was very poor in worldly circumstances he would not accept charity from any one except a Brahmin. Almost the whole of his time was spent in the worship of God. There is a story regarding the depth of his devotion. It is not a fable. I myself heard it from the people of his village when I went there. They had not forgotten it even then. One day this pious Brahmin went to pay a visit to his daughter who was living in a place about eight miles from his village. When he was about to reach his destination he saw a

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forest full of flowers fit for worship. At once he forgot all about the purpose of his journey. He collected many beautiful flowers, returned home and was lost in ecstasy worshipping God with those flowers. His wife asked him why he had returned so soon after his visit to his daughter. It was then that he remembered the intended visit to his daughter. It is no wonder that a God-intoxicated son was born of this great Brahmin who was a prince among Bhaktas.

There is a story told by the village people with great faith and devotion about the birth of Sri Ramakrishna. That pious Brahmin once went to Gaya, sacred among us for the propitiation of the Pitris. He performed all the rites prescribed by the Shastras with his usual faith and devotion and lay down to sleep at night exhausted by the penances, fasts and works of the day. At once he had a vision. Gadadhara, the Lord Himself appeared before him and informed him that He would incarnate as his son. Remembering his poverty the devotee raised many objections. But the Lord paid no heed to them and repeated His resolve to incarnate as his son. About this time the pure-minded wife of the Brahmin who was in their village had another experience. She went to the local temple with a few companions. She felt that a power had entered her from the God of that temple. Her friends on hearing this, made fun of her. From that day she used to have many visions and experiences such as hearing the divine music of the flute of Sri Krishna. When she told these things to her friends they thought that she had gone crazy and suggested various methods of curing what they considered to be her disease. But when her husband returned from Gaya and heard of the matter he comforted her with the assurance that he had also similar experiences which showed that the Lord was going to bless them soon. In due time a son was born who became the world famous Sri Ramakrishna. The father named him Gadadhara on account of his firm conviction that the Lord Gadadhara had incarnated as his son as had

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been foretold during the vision. The boy grew and became an expert in all kinds of plays. At the proper age he had to go to School. But he protested saying that the object of such education was but the earning of a bit of bread and that what he sought was the supreme knowledge. Still by the compulsion of his elder brother who was a great Pandit he attended school for a time. But he learnt practically nothing from there. In a short time he gave up that system of studies and engaged himself in playing with his companions listening to the recitals of the sacred stories and reciting them himself without the least alteration, to those who were delighted to hear them. Many were surprised at the tremendous memory of the boy who could recite even the longest poems after hearing them but once.

At one time while he was playing in the fields with his play-mates he saw clouds gathering in the sky and at once lost all outward consciousness. He said that he was filled with ecstatic joy at seeing the blue colour of the clouds which reminded him of Sri Krishna. On another occasion, there was a great feast in the house of a rich man of the place. The Brahmin Pandits who had gathered there were hotly discussing some abstruse philosophical questions. Each one tried to show his learning and defeat the others in arguments so that he may get the highest donation from the host. They could not come to any agreement on a question they were discussing. Gadadhara, the boy, who was sitting in a corner suddenly gave them the solution and they were astonished. All the Pandits heartily blessed the boy.

At this time a woman of the non-Brahmin caste built a temple near Calcutta. The Brahmins began to say that no one among them would instal the image or conduct worship in such a temple. The pious lady was very much distressed and sought the advice of the leading Pandits of the time. The learned brother of Gadadhara advised her to dedicate the temple to her Guru who was a Brahmin and hence there would

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be no objection to any one to instal the image or conduct the worship. She did so. And thus began the relation of Gadadhara to the temple of Dakshineshwara. For a time his brother was the priest and then Gadadhara had to attend to his duties. At this time he was in a peculiar mood. "Mother, Mother, will you not grant me your vision?" was the incessant prayer of the boy. For a time he controlled himself and conducted the worship in the temple. But soon after he lost all consciousness of the fact that he was in the world. 'Mother, Mother' was the one cry that ever rose from his lips. Some times he would put the offerings in his own mouth, at other times he would be looking at the sun from dawn to sunset. With the passing of each day he would deeply lament as one day had passed and the Mother had not revealed Herself to him. He would rub his face on the ground in his agony. He was prepared to give up his life because he was not blessed with the vision of the Mother. After such a period of intense austerities he was blessed by the Mother. From that time he would see his Mother near him whenever he called on Her. Just as we see each other face to face, so Gadadhara used to see the Mother. He was always a boy full of mirth and fun because he realized that he was the child of the Divine Mother. He used to ask his Mother for everything. He prayed to have a darshan of the Lord Sri Krishna and that most beautiful cowherd boy with that marvellous flute was before him. He wished to be blessed with the vision of Allah and lo! Allah stood in front. Thus he was blessed with the living visions of all the Gods. This is the basis of the teaching of Sri Ramakrishna. Every thing is the Mother. That is the Divine Prakriti, and Prakriti and Brahman are only two aspects of the same Divinity. That Divinity assumes different names and forms according to the desire and capacity of each individual. All religions are but various paths to reach the same Divinity. The God is the same though the paths may be different.

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All his desires had been fulfilled by actual, constant and living vision of the Mother. As he could not attend to the routine work of worship in the temple another person was appointed in his stead. Gadadhara spent his days in a retired spot near the temple. At this time a sanyasin came there. He found in Gadadhara a fit recipient for the highest Advaita knowledge and asked him whether he would learn the Vadantic truths from him. Gadadhara said that he would ask his Mother. She told him that the sanyasin had been sent by Her for that very purpose. That sanyasin instructed him and was astonished to find that this extraordinary person realized in three days the highest Samadhi which he had taken more than forty years to attain. From that time this illiterate boy Gadadhara, born in an out of the way village, began to disseminate Divine light to the world and became the Divine man Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.

Sri Ramakrishna.

(*A talk given by Swami Nirmalanandaji in August 1917 at Trivandram.*)

Published in the Prabuddha Keralam, Vol—II No. 12.

I was a mere boy when I had the good fortune to come tnto contact with Sri Ramakrishna. I had the privilege of serving him for four or five years. What shall I say about him. He was a pure child of Nature without anything artificial in him. He may be compared to a very rare and invaluable gem, fresh from the mine without being polished and embellished (for commercial purposes.)

At the time of Nirvikalpa Samadhi, he had not the least consciousness of the body. But at other times, he used to be often like a child. Saying "an ant has bitten me; I cannot bear the pain," he would be seen placing his hand in the ant-hole. (There is a belief among the children of Bengal that if one keeps his

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hand in an ant-hole, the pain caused by ant-bite will vanish). Seeing this child aspect, many would think whether he was the great Mahapurusha who was expounding a few moments ago the most abstruse topics of Vedanta in such a simple, charming and homely manner.

What great wonder! All the doubts of the listeners are dispelled by his narration of his bold realisations. He was never in the habit of clearing doubts by quotations from the Shastras in the manner of a Pandit. What acquaintance had this illiterate man with the Shastras. But nature was the grand book for him. I doudt whether any one has ever mastered the book of Nature so closely and deeply as he.

When Swami Vivekananda rushed to him at first in the pride of intellectual strength (knowledge) with the question "Have you seen God," his reply was "yes, my boy and I shall also lead you that way if you so wish". This bold reply cast a spell on Vivekananda and he remained devoted to him for ever. Just consider yourself what an infinite power this uncivilised (unpolished) man must have had.

The great leader of the Brahmo Samaj, Sj. Keshabchandra Sen, who had attained a very high place in education and refinement, used to visit this illiterate man and sit humbly hy his side drinking deep the pure nectar of words that flowed from the natural (unartficial or unpolluted) fountain of his holy lips. When Pratap Chandra Muzundar and other magnates of the Brahmo Samaj would begin to discuss with Sri Ramakrishna, Keshab would forbid them with the remark "It is not with such a one that you should discuss. Listen carefully to his words of wisdom."

Many tormented by various doubts and difficulties used to go to Sri Ramakishna for gettidg solace. The Master would instinctively know their conditon and give them perfect consolation in an indirect manner

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by his talks to others present there. Keshab had caused a rule to be passed by his Brahmo Samaj that a girl can be given in marriage only after she had completed her 18th year. But he himself had his 12 year old daughter married to a Raja. Keshab was for this reason disrespected and abused by many members of the Samaj. Distressed and distracted by this, Keshab came to Sri Ramakrishna. The Master knew nothing of these matters. Keshab sat in a corner. At once Sri Ramakrishna said addressing another: "Birth, marriage and death are not under the control of man. They are all under God's control. It would be a tremendous foolishness for a man to make rules and regulations regarding these three." Keshab understood and was consoled.

Sri Ramakrishna would not generally wear clothes when he was alone. Like a child, he would have his cloth in his armpit and run hither and thither. Visitors may be pouring in at that time. He would then say, "Some are coming here. They are decent, civilised folk. It is not proper for me to remain like this without any cloth. Where is my cloth. Bring it here", and he would search for it. All the time, the cloth may be in his armpit. How wonderful! I have never seen such a wonderful person in my life or even heard of such a one.

Many have often asked Sri Ramakrishna about the state of Samadhi. When he would attempt to speak of it, he would fall into that state himself. The devoted Mathur Babu has many a time tested him. Once he took him to a house of disreputable women who lived by their immorality. They had been apprised before of his coming and as to what they had to do. They wanted to try all their arts on him, but it was in vain.He merely said: "My Mother has assumed this form also" and began to praise them as the manifestations of the Divine Mother. They could not approach him. They were struck with shame and bewildered.

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They found fault with Mathur Babu for placing them in this false possition by trying to bring down a Mahapurusha. Mathur Babu was for the time satisfied. But later on he began to doubt whether Sri Ramakrishna may not be undeveloped sexually and hence behaved like this. His thought was read by the Master who conclusively proved to him on another occasion that he was strong, virile and fully developed. Mathur Babu's doubts were completely removed.

Do you think that Swami Vivekananda would believe anything blindly? He doubted the Master as much as he believed him many a time. Sri Ramakrishna convinced the Swami of his power and greatness. "An Emperor sometimes travels with all his imperial pomp and splendour and sometimes incognito as a beggar. This time, the Emperor has come as a beggar." These words of Sri Ramakrishna to Swamiji referred to the Master Himself. Vivekananda believed and yet doubted. The incident which gave him full conviction is noteworthy.

The Master is about to pass away. Physical power had been completely exhausted and he is lying on his bed. A few moments more and the life-breath will cease to be. Vivekananda is sitting near. He is still in a doubting mood. He was thinking to himself: "How can I regard this man to be God, this man who is stretched on his sick bed and suffers pain like an ordinary mortal: "This was Vivekananda's doubt. At once Sri Ramakrishna raised himself up, sat straight on his bed and said with great force. "Are you still in doubt, Nonen? You do not believe me yet. He who incarnated as Rama in the Treta Yuga and as Krishna in the Dwapara Yuga is verily this Ramakrishna, but not in your Vedantic sense. He who was Rama and Krishna is indeed this Ramakrishna" and he pointed to himself and passed away.

People belonging to various religions used to visit Ramakrishna. He would give each one the

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instructions befitting his particular bent of mind, character and nature. In this way many atheists became great bilievers in God. I know of many instances of those addicted to drink, sex or other vices being converted by his touch into good and pure people.

His advice to atheists was as follows. "I do not know whether God exists or not. If there be an Almighty creator, God, may He reveal Himself to me. Pray like this with a pure mind incessantly for three days without any intermisson. If you do not see God by this, come to me. I shall show Him to you." These were not mere words. I know that many realised the truth of these words.

Sri Ramakrishna used to talk constantly to people who were pouring in day and night about God with great love and supreme compassion, forgetting his own bodily necessities such as food, sleep and rest. Thus he was attacked by cancer in the throat. Many begged of him not to talk. But his reply was: "How despicable is this body. It is like a ripe pumpkin. It looks very beautiful from the outside. But the inside is rotten. If some good can be done by this perishable body for the sake of others, what can be more desirable?" This was how he lived unto the last.

Ramakrishna is not born always. His manifestation is an extraordinary event, rare and wonderful, occurring in Nature once in many thousands of years.

Sri Ramakrishna and Same Sightedness.

(*A lecture given by Swami Nirmalanandaji on the occasion of the Sri Ramakrishna Birthday Celebration at Quilon in 1918*).

"Vidya vinaya sampanne Brahmane Gavi Hastini
Suni chaiva Svapake cha Panditah Samadarshinah" ||
(Gita.)

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The Pandits, i e., those who have known the Atman, are same-sighted with regard to a Brahmana endowed with learning, humility and other good qualities, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a Chandala". Such is the teaching of the Gita. But many so-called Pandits of our land, that is, those who have merely learnt the Shastras, become same-sighted in another way. They have no difficulty or hesitation in repeating this Sloka and commenting upon it most learnedly. They expatiate on the text and prove that all is verily Brahman. But it ends there. Their practice is quite different. This is but deceiving the ordinary mass of people. "Everything is Brahman. There is no difference between myself and another. The beggar, the rich man, the learned man, the illiterate man, an animal, a tree, are all the same". This is not merely to be repeated or thought of in the mind. It has to be realised in practice. This is the great lesson Sri Ramakrishna taught by many incidents in his life. I shall narrate one such incident.

Many of you know that there is a great temple, the temple of Dakshineswar near Calcutta and that Sri Ramakrishna used to live there. From the time when his greatness came to be known throughout Bengal, many would come daily to visit him. Some of them were real seekers after God, and some were mere sight-seers who wanted to enjoy the fine views, the temple, the garden, the Ganges, the huge buildings, the plants, the flowers etc. Some so-called civilised youths belonging to the latter class of people came to Dakshineswar on a certain occasion. They left their carriage outside the temple and began to walk round the splendid garden by the Ganges side enjoying the fine breeze. After a time, they thought of entering inside the temple. At that time, they saw a person standing near. It would seem that that man had known nothing about the arrival of these distinguished visitors. He did not seem to be 'civilised' in their sense. He had but a loin cloth on. They felt sure that he was the gardener. They wanted to get some flowers from the garden. Why? To place them

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on their button-holes and appear, highly civilised.' "Come here, gardener" they called in a tone of authority and the man approached them. "Pluck those flowers and bring them to us" they commanded. The gardener did so at once. He did not utter a single word. These 'civilised' gentlemen placed them on their button-holes and were greatly pleased. After they had visited the temple, they thought they may also see the Paramahamsa and enquired where he was staying. Thus they came to his room. O God, the gardener they had already met is seated in the smaller bedstead. They were stunned, they could not advance a step and stood there bewildered. It was then that the truth dawned on them that the person whom they had ordered in tones of authoriy to pluck the flowers was none other than the Jivanmukta, who had spent many years in various Sadhanas, had realised God and became thereafter the Guru of countless people. Struck with shame and sorrow, they became humble, prostrated before the God-man and retired in haste not knowing what they should do. But, there was no change in the calm and unruffled face of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. He had forgotten that the persons who were now prostrating before him were the very same persons who had commanded him but a few moments ago.

When they left the temple, they told some others with great regret of the grave sin they had committed. Thus we also came to know ot it. One day, we asked Sri Ramakrishna about it. We said "when they commanded you under a misapprehension, could you not have told them that you were the Sanyasin living in this temple and not the gardener." Bhagavan's reply was as follows: "What are you saying ? Am I not the gardener ? Yes, I am the gardener and the garden. I am everything. I do not see any differece. What they said is quite true."

This is the real same-sightedness. This is the real Panditya m. This is the state described by the Lord in the Gita as 'Samadarshitwam' same-sight-edness. This is the state of the vision of oneness,

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non-differentiation, attained by a true jnanin. It is this state of non-differentiation we should try to attain by the complete destruction of our egoism. Without that honest attempt, there is no use in learning the Shastras and trying to expound them. Seek, therefore, to put into practice, what you have learned. May Sri Ramakrishna bless you to do so.

Hinduism.

(*A lecture delivered by Swamiji at Trivandrum.*)

From Prabuddhakeralam, Vol. VI.

It is hardly two hours since I returned from Nagarcoil. I am not therefore in a condition to make a long speech. However, I shall speak to you for a few minutes, on Hinduism and how it differs from other religions.

We are called Hindus, and our religion Hinduism. It is a great mistake. We are not Hindus; our religion is not Hinduism. Other religions have their respective founders: Christ of Christianity; Muhommed of Muhommedanism; Budha of Budhism; Zorater of Zorasterainism; but our religion has no person or sect called Hindu as its founder. How, then, is it proper to call it Hinduism? The term Hindu was applied to the people living on the banks of the river Indus. It was the Greaks and the Persians who invaded India on the North-west that gave them that name. But those people had no particular religion of their own, entirely different and distinct from that of others. How, then, can their religion be called Hinduism.

The name given to our religion by our forefathers is Sanatana-Dharma (The Religion Enternal). Its teaching is "Swadharme nidhanam sreyah Paradharmo bhayāvahah" (Better to die doing one's own dharma than to take up another's, because it is fraught with fear).

Man has a dual nature. The one, animality, bewitches him by sense-pleasures; the other, Divinity,

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helps him to attain Eternal Bliss. To develop this divine nature and to attain Eternal Bliss is man's Swadharma. Even to meet with death in carrying out this Swadharma is preferable to being addicted to sense-gratification which is Paradharma. Our Rishis have discovered four methods of developing this divine nature. The first is Jnana Yoga. There is the enquiry: "Kim kāranam Brahma kuta smajatah? Jeevāma kena kvacha sampratishtā | Adhishitāh kena sukhethareshu, Vartāmahe Brahmavido vyavastham" || (What is the great First Cause? Whence have we come? How do we live? Which is our support? Why are we attached to objects producing unhappiness? How may be tread the path of the knowers of Brahman?)

And again; "Kasmin nu vijnāte sarvam idam vijnātam bhavati?" (By knowing which one thing does all this become known?)

Thus it began with the investigation into the cause of things. It progressed and culminated established in science of being. This grand philosophy, this Eternal Truth, was discovered and proclaimed by the Rishis at a time when the anscestors of the civilised westerners—of the torch-bearers of the so-called civilisation of the west—roamed about in forests, eating raw-flesh and painting their bodies. Here alone, in ours alone of all the religions of the world, you find Science wedded to Religion, going hand-in-hand with it. The Rishis never shut out the light of science. While Christianity holds it a sin to doubt or discuss the words of the Bible regarding creation and other matters our religion invites all intellectuals, logicians, scientists and metaphysicians to put the words of our scriptures to the most fiery test.

The second method is Raja Yoga, what attracts the attention of scientists. The scientist wants to observe facts for himself and to experiment upon them. He wants to see things before he believes in them.

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And this is the path for him. He need not believe in a God or Satan, not even in a Soul. Belief in one's own mind and a knowledge of its workings are all that is required. The mind can be known by observing and controlling its modifications. So, Raja Yoga teaches us how to do it. When, after practice, the mind has been controlled, we can see that it is as inert a substance as any other and that all its energy and powers are due to the immediate presence of the Soul. It is similar to the case of a ball of iron becoming red and hot when put into the fire. Then we shall also clearly see that behind even the mind there is the Soul, separate from the gross, subtle and causal bodies, omnipresent, free and pure.

The third is Karmayoga, the method of work. We are asked: "Do you not see your brethren grovelling in misery, disease and poverty, ignorant and helpless? How then can you be happy, keeping yourself aloof and working for your own good? Your worship, your study, your meditation, are not all these for your own salvation? How can you be so self-centred, cruel, so heartless?" It says, 'come, come to your brethren, the poor and the destitute, the hungry and the needy, the lepers on the road and the orphans in the street crying for help. Come and help them. There is your pride of birth and wealth and learning. Smother it; root out your selfish desires and affections; pour out your energies and sacrifice all for them'. This is the message of Karma Yoga. What is your motive? A name for yourself? If so, you do not deserve that name. Do you love all, irrespective of caste, colour, creed or country? Do you feel that the good of all living beings is your good? And do you therefore work for them without an axe of your own to grind? Then you are a Karma Yogi.

Last, but not the least is Bhaktiyoga. Is there a God? That is the question. Friend, why do you bother your head about it? Do you not see, cannot even a

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blind man see, that there is a power behind the universe, guiding it and controlling it? You say you work for the good of the world. Indeed! your philanthropy is another name for your vanity. What power have you to work with? Can you do anything but with the help of the controlling Cosmic Power. The world was, before you were born: It will be, even after you pass away. It does not stand before you, cup in hand. It is not a supplicant at your door. Just think of that All-pervading Omnipotence! The very conception of it will strike you with awe, stupify your mind and paralyse your limbs. Away with your conceit that you help the world. Think of that Infinite Power which is also Infinite Love. Do not be so vain and foolish as to think that you can help the world. The Lord of the world will take care of it. He alone has been doing it all these eons. He may be left to continue to do so in future ages also. The world does not stand in need of our help. It is we that want its help. Try to get it. Try to reach Him in whom we live and move and have our being. This is Bhakti Yoga. Bhakti is Love, unswerving and unceasing. It is not prayer or worship to secure wealth or health or children or success, but love for its own sake, love pure and unselfish. Love is the one motive power in the universe. Impelled by that power the robber robs, the murderer murders. If you look deep enough, you find that, the play of love, all the world over. Love is the form of that Cosmic Power. Rama, Krishna, Shiva and others are its reflections. Portions of that infinite ocean of love get solidified by the cooling Bhakti of the devotee and take the shape of Rama, Krishna etc. As the ice melts and becomes water again by the action of the Sun's rays falling on it, so the forms of the gods melt into that Love again on the rise of the Sun of Knowledge and the devotee gets merged therein.

These four paths have all alike been well-laid and well established in our religion. And these four will be found to be included in every other method formulated

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by any other religion in any part of the world. Every religious practice may be found to come under one or more of these main paths. At the same time our religion does not preclude the appearance of a fifth one. If any one anywhere finds out a new method of developing the latent Divinity in man, our religion will honour him as a Rishi or an Avatar. We have never been exclusive.

One of the great distinctive features of our religion is that it accepts truth from whichever quarter it may come. "This way and no other, if you want to be saved", has been the dogma of every other religion in the world. Ours, on the contrary, points out numerous paths and gives us the choice to follow whichever, one, suits us best. This many-sidedness and broadness are one of the special features of our religion, not to be found anywhere else. Other systems have to struggle against science, philosophy and metaphysics. They tremble before the onslaught of man's intellect. Ours has transcended them all and it shines with the light of Truth Eternal.

A close study of the different religions also reveals another fact: They have all, directly or indirectly, borrowed something from ours. The Trinity of the Christians is an instance in point. The Greak Bible will prove it. The English Bible differs from its original in Greak in many respects. The rituals of the Catholic Christians are taken from our religion. Even such an opponent of Hinduism as Mr. Hopkins admits it. Another great peculiarity of Hinduism is that it does not depend upon externals, practices, rituals, schools or sects or persons while other religions tie down man, however advanced he might be, to something outside himself, either a person or a law. Our religion alone takes man beyond everything, makes him transcend law and go beyond the three gunas, beyond even human mind.

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As I told yow at the outset, I am unable to make a long speech. I shall, however, try to answer any questions or clear any doubts you may have concerning today's topic.

Address at the Hindu Vanita Sangha, Trivandrum.

(Prabuddha Bharata of September, 1927—Page 429.)

The members of the Hindu Vanita Sangham, Trivandrum (S. India), mustered strong on the evening of the 9th July last in the local museum lecture hall to listen to the learned address of Swami Nirmalananda of the Sri Ramakrishna Mission. Precisely at 3-30 p. m. the meeting began with prayers and music. Swamiji arrived at about 4-30 p. m. and delivered an inspiring address in English touching upon the various problems affecting the welfare of Indian women in general and Travancore women in particular. In the course of his address, the learned lecturer dwelt upon the practicl aspect of Hinduism which was best fitted for home life which was rendered so sweet by the hallowed presence and teachings of an ideal Hindu mother. Unlike the custom in western countries, particulerly America, Indian, and especially Hindu women, preferred a solemn conclave of their own sex to the mixed artificial audience where so much of decorum had to be observed. There was no reason to discourage this as the social and domestic needs of the two countries were found to differ. A rare type of hindu mother was Sri Ramakrishna's wife. She wanted Sri Ramakrishna to teach her Realization so that she might also enjoy the sight of God. When Sri Ramakrishna entered Samadhi this paragon of virtue prostrated at His feet and called Him Mother. This was true realization. But our women could not and need not for the present aspire for such spiritual bliss. They can be more concerned with worldly prosperity in order that they may clothe the ragged and succour the needy and lowly. Above all they should pay particular attention to the training of their children since, as Emerson said,

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a country's greatness depends upon the future citizens. At the same time, children should not be allowed to imitate them in rituals but should grasp the significance of each sacred custom. Girls should be taught to sing without the drowning effect of harmoniums. Pure music and fine arts should be encouraged. It is not enough if a thing is good. It should be used properly. A Hindu mother's responsibility was indeed great since the father often found it impossible to devote any attention to his children. There was no harm in imitating Westerners in the training up of children, but a wholesale imitation is to be condemned. Children should imbibe the sanitary and hygienic methods of the west, but not their dandyism. There was then the question of marriage which should be based on principle. The wife is to share the pleasures and pains of the husband intelligently. Sri Ramakrishna's marriage was an extreme type. When Sri Ramakrishna was about to breathe his last, He seems to have said to His wife: "No one is as fortunate as you are. Some might have great daughters. You are the mother of an illustrious son (referring to Swami Vivekananda)." The regeneration of India lies in the hands of the Indian mothers. Let mother India be the mother of many noble Indian mothers. Let religion be the foundation of greatness. See that the children are brought up carefully and properly and the goal is in view.

Inspite of the Swamiji's introductory remarks that he was least fitted to address an audience composed purely of women, the lecture was listened to with rapt attention as it contained precious gems of wisdom. Swamiji's speech was with characteristic eloquence andcharity translated into chaste Malayalam by Swamiji's disciple, Padmanabhan Tampi. After this was over there was again music accompanied by Kolattam.

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The English Address to
SRIMAT SWAMI NIRMALANANDAJI MAHARAJ.

Revered Swamiji,

The spirit of unity in the midst of diversity that you have maintained throughout your mission amongst the ostensibly differing communities of India and the resonant chord of constructive and synthetic thought and work of which you have been a living exponent as a true co-adjutor of Swami Vivekananda, make us approach you on your arrival here, with our tribute of appreciation and regard and to place such tribute before you in a spirit of humility.

From the day you received your inspiration from the Great Master your spiritual nature has grown stronger, brighter and higher serving as a beacon light to the followers of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda in helping them to tread the path laid down by them for the service of our beloved Motherland and of humanity. We crave your blessings, and we earnestly trust that your parental care, friendly love and helping hand will always be extended to us in the journey we have undertaken.

We remain,

Ever yours in service and love,

Members of the Vivekananda Mission.

Calcutta,

The 22nd September 1930.

Extracts from the Swamiji's Reply.

In reply to the address Srimat Swami Nirmalananda, the President of the Mission said :—

"Here is an humble and most insignificant servant of Sri Ramakrishna before you. He is already a little more than three score and eight. Years of arduous and troublesome work have told upon his health and he is not a great speaker as well. You cannot, therefore

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expect a long speech from him. Though I cannot properly express my feeling on account of the fulness of my heart, you will instinctively understand what is going on in my heart. You will feel it vibrating in your hearts too, for you have your hearts tuned to mine.

"Only a few months back while I was at Bangalore, I was very glad to know of some kind of socio-religious movement along the lines of Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda order going on in this place. Indeed slowly the idea grew up amongst those who desired to take a forward march in that direction, that instead of frittering away or wasting their energies in the vain attempts at putting a check-mate to the centralisation of power and the growing imperialism amongst the monastic followers of the Ramakrishna Order, they should organise themselves for carrying the work along the lines laid down by their Master. This idea assumed practical shape when here was started an organisation, still then only a nucleus but fully inspired and installed with the thoughts of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. As I have already told you, I became really glad when I heard of it and agreed to co-operate with it also when I was asked to do so. I am glad to see that the nucleated young body is to-day vitalised and I am sure that in time it will radiate the light which the illustrious Swamiji came to broadcast all over the world. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda came to find peace and harmony in the midst of diversity and discord. Those of us, who are now desirous of carrying aloft their light and their messages of peace and harmony, cannot, therefore in the least, desire to plant the smallest seeds of discord while engaged in the work of the Master; as such this new organisation is neither a competitor nor a counter institution to any other organisation or movement, which have same or similar ideals and purpose. This world and the sphere of work are large enough to allow more organisations than one to work side by

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side or in co-operation. That can be easily understood and I need not, therefore, dilate much on it.

"However, I fervently pray to Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda that their fostering light may guide your path. There may be many impediments and pitfalls in the way, but these will be removed by their blessings. If we have sincere and complete devotion, we will live long and grow into a gigantic organisation which will spread over the lenght and bredth of Bharatavarsha. It is bound to grow and spread its branches and we will see one day that the sons and daughters of the Rishis are drinking at this new fountain of inspiration. The light that was blazing under the banyan tree of Dakshineswar will scatter its rays everywhere and illumine every sphere of activity.

History tells us that whenever a great man comes in the world every advancement is made in all spheres of national life whether social, civic or otherwise. Such has been the case with Sri Ramakrishna. He came to bring peace and harmony. The so-called political and social movements cannot bring peace unless humanity learns to think that every human being is a part and parcel of God and sons and daughters of the Almighty. When the world will put on that angle of vision, peace will reign everywhere.

"I fully appreciate the very kind and loving words expressed about my humble self who is not even fit to touch the dust of the feet of Sri Ramakrishna. I feel sincerely grateful to you and thank you from the bottom of my heart for your love to me. I pray, if my words have any power, that this nucleated body may live long."

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF

Srimat Swami Nirmalananda Maharaj as Chairman of 1st Religious Convention of Nikhil Banga Ramakrishna Mahotsab, (Calcutta) commencing on Friday, the 20th Feb. 1931.

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The call has come to me. It is the inscrutable way of the Great Mother why She should choose the humblest of the humble to serve Her. There lies the mystery of the Shakti, and there lies the beauty of it, and there lies the eternal love of the Divine in whose eyes there is true *Samadarsana*—all children are equal to Her. It is the same with Her divine child Paramahamsa Deva. With him there was no distinction between creeds and faiths, between past and present, between the powerful and the lowly, between the rich and the poor, between the devout and the profligate and as well between the temple and the marketplace. He embraced all and made obeisance to all, taught all and learnt from all. That spirit which wended its way through all the labyrinthine ways and alleys of Bagh-Bazaar, his favourite haunts, for picking up the yearning souls, as his material vehicles equally transfused itself into all the labyrinthine complexes of modern civilisation for giving his magic touch to the unillumined, the oppressed and the tempest-tossedway farers of the world. I bow to him that he has, in that eternal spirit of charity and compassion, chosen me as his *Ratha*, but he is still the *Rathin* that speaketh unto you.

I shall not, on this solemn occasion, trouble you with dry teachings and sayings. There were thousand and one occasions when the Great Prophet himself used to remain a mute spectator before a thirsting soul with occasional glimpses of smiles hovering between his penetrating eyes and quivering lips. For verily, it is not the *Vaikhari* speech alone that speaketh, but the *Pashyanti* speech that rises in the heart like waves and passes beyond the bounds of the flesh, and falls like breakers on the hearts of the audience like sweet caresses to lull them, to soothe them, to embrace them. I am one of them who has had the good fortune to experience this touch, and I shall fail in my task if I do not carry that touch. May he infuse in me his *Shakti!*

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Again it is in that eternal fountain-head of Atman of that Great Saint that every warring creed found a synthesis in his flow of love, religions became universal in his simple but illuminating and vitalising rays of wisdom, and the down-trodden and the cast-away found their haven of grace and peace in his programme of *Seva*.

Verily! Verily! such a God-Man was born whose 96th birth-day we have the proud privilege to celebrate, here, with you all, respected brethren of different nationalities, faiths, and creeds—one whose life was a living evidence of the depth and sweetness of all religions. One whose holiness, blessedness, unstudied wisdom, child-like peacefulness and affection towards all men and whose consuming, all-absorbing love for God were unique and unprecedented. The Great Vivekananda truly said that long before the ideas of universal toleration and sympathy were mooted and discussed in any country in this world, there lived a man whose very life was a Parliament of Religions itself.

Indeed, the day of harmony has dawned with the birth of such a Prophet, who is the fulfilment of the Sages of the past—a summation of them all, who could conceive of such a harmonious blending of conflicting creeds and dogmas of the different faiths of the world and who demonstrated it in every moment of his life.

Brethren, we remind you of a few precepts of the Great Prophet of Synthesis when offering you a cordial welcome on behalf of the Nikhil Banga Ramakrishna Birthday Celebration Committee :—

(1) Religion is One.

Verily, I say unto you, many a religion springeth up, spreadeth and decayeth by the Will of the Lord.

Therefore, unto all the devotees of all the relgions of the world, Adoration!

Religion, however, is One : it hath been so for all times, and it shall be so for ever!

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(2) The Lord is One, though He hath many Names.

Alas! Alas! that man should be quarreling with his brother-man, yea, quarreling in the name of Religion! in the dear Name of the Lord Himself!

That the brother Hindu, the brother Mussalman, the brother Christian should all be quarreling among themselves:

Understanding it not that He that is called God in one country is the Same that they call Brahman in another:

Yes, the Same that is called Father in Heaven, is the Same that is called Allah:

For, verily, I say unto you, the Lord is One;

But the Lord hath a thousand Names!

CONCLUDING SPEECH OF

Srimat Swami Nirmalananda Maharaj as Chairman of the Religious Convention (2nd day) of the Nikhil Banga Ramakrishna Mahotsab (Cal.) on Saturday, the 21st February, 1931.

GENTLEMEN,

You have heard what the different religious protagonists say about their doctrines and cults. I hope being generally Hindu you cannot but show respect for others' opinions and others' points of view. As our great Gita lays down all the paths that lead to Him—

Yē yedha mam prapadyanthe thamsthadhaiva
bhajamyaham.

You have also heard the differentiations that make out the peculiar features of a particular faith. It all depends on the emphasis that one gives on one or other aspect of human life. And I hope you have also seen the underlying unity wherein lies the all-embracing character of such a communion as we, humble

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harvest-gatherers in the field, endeavour to find out on this platform. Whether you are JNANI to explore and comprehend with the power of your intellect to realise the truths of here and hereafter, or you are a man of action to serve and co-operate so that men may achieve and glorify, or you are a researcher to attain to higher and higher pursuits of human potentialities, or a devotee to dive deep into the bliss of the spirit-life, there is underlying all these different view-points a holy thread that binds all, a synthetic entity that transcends and yet interpenetrates the domains of intellect, feeling and action. It may be a subjective realisation to satisfy an individual or it may often be an objective orientation of a life-divine that throws its beneficient radiation to raise the lowly, to enliven the life-less and to buoy up a foundering soul. I believe every faith has its prophets to give that orientation.

My friends, we have met here not only to pay our respects to all those prophets and seers, but also to avoid error of the propagandists as well. Our purpose here will be only half accomplished, if we do not meditate on the underlying unity and forget the lines of differences. I must emphasise that this is possible first, by a subjective relisation pervading the entire outlook, the real man evolves in the sphere of 'Samadarsana'. There are two and two Spheres where perfect equality is attainable—one in the level of the death where there exists the equality of dust —particles are absolutely equal to one another, and another sphere of the Paramahamsic stage where the differences of men and things are but the differences of functions each fulfilling itself in one's own way. That equality is attainable by respect for all, liberty for all, liberty to think and liberty to act, liberty to commit mistakes and liberty to rectify them, liberty to take initiative and liberty to lie low, and finally by love for all transcending the form and convention of particular creeds and dogmas, the canons of legislators and moralists, the claims of the old and the new, as well

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as the limitations of either Papa or Punya. I am fortunate that I have come in touch with such a synthetic personality in Ramakrishna Deva. You may have come across others. All respect to them. I shall close this conference with only three words : Respect, Liberty and Love which I have witnessed in my revered Guru transformed into self-respect, self-realisation and self-renunciation. It is these key-notes that are necessary to be remembered in this troublous times of warring nations and malignant reactions. If in this small endeavour of ours we can imprint on you these three words Respect, Liberty and Love, we think we preach the Paramahamsa Ramakrishna Deva. And in that mission we sow the seed of a great synthesis.

REPLY TO THE WELCOME ADDRESS

Presented by the Citizens of Pudukad.

Before thanking you for your welcome address let me congratulate you on the success which has crowned your efforts to establish a Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama here. Many matters crowd into my mind on this occasion. But bodily weakness prevents my giving expression to them. You know that and I am confident, you will excuse me. Just two words, I venture to speak. Firstly to my brethren who are called the depressed classes : Brethren who have been labelled depressed on account of the social tyranny extending over many centuries, I have come here with a message of hope and courage to you. I give you a message of joy, your era of emancipation has dawned. You are no longer depressed. Henceforth there will be none to suppress you ; none can oppress you. Sri Ramanuja addressed you as Tirukulathar. You who are born of Srikulam are verily the children of God and heirs to His glory. You also have that relationship with God which the so-called upper classes claim to have. You

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and they are alike the children of God. They alone have no superiority, nor you alone any inferiority. You are not removed or distant from God. What have the Seers of old proclaimed about Iswara ? What do the Vedas, the highest authority of the upper classes say ? "Sahasra seersha purushah sahasrakshah sahasrapāt. Sa bhumim visvato vritwa Atyatishtat dasangulam." Again : "Brahmanosya mukhamaseed Bāhu rajanyah kritah. Ooroo tadasya yad Vaisyah padbhyam Soodro ajayata". All the four varnas are parts and limbs of the self-same God. What is proclaimed by the Vedas is such a God who is everywhere, who is in everything and who is everything. As a natural result of this conception they have taught same-sightedness. "Vidya vinaya sampanne brahmane gavi hastini. Suni chaiva swapake cha panditah samadarsina." While the Vedas have declared thus, what have the Vaidikas done ? They contended that they alone had the right to the Vedas and so kept it as their private property, nay, more, to gain their narrow, selfish ends. They cut up the Virat-Purusha, threw away parts of His body and made Him a crippled God—a mutilated God. It is such a crippled God and not the God of the Vedas that has been worshipped by them who pride themselves as your superiors. As a direct consequence of it, we have fallen, degraded. Sri Ramakrishna incarnated to lift us up from this fallen, degraded condition. He did not come for the good of any particular class or country. He came for the good of all men and all women of all countries, of every living creature in the world. What you see here to-day is the light of the rays which have emanated from the effulgence which was in the Panchavati at Dakshineswar.

Many changes are happening in the world to-day ; social, economic and political upheavals arise. You should not let go this opportunity. You should strive sedulously and secure for yourself an honourable position. Give up indolence and despondency. This

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Ashrama will conduce to your progress. May God bless you and make you realise that He is not confined within an Ashrama or within the four walls of a Mosque or Church but that He resides within the heart of every living being ; that He pervades all objects, animate and inanimate and may He enable you to worship that Virat-Purusha.

The mother of the Raja of Kollangode told me that it was a Nambudiri-Brahmin who first gave Bhiksha to Swami Vivekananda when he came to Kerala. That offer of Bhiksha to Sri Swamiji cannot but bear fruit. How is it then ? I was thinking that the Nambudiri Brahmin society is not seen co-operating with the other groups in this movement. Now it is seen as having fructified. Firstly at Ottapalam and secondly here, it is the help of Nambudiri gentlemen that has brought the Ashramas into being. This augurs a bright future for Kerala, I believe. I am very glad that to-day we have mingled here as brothers without distinction of high and low.

I thank you for your kind words of praise concerning me in your address. I should like you to bear in mind that if at all I have done anything praiseworthy, it was not done by my power. Hearing you I was reminded of a story in the Upanishads. Once, in very ancient days, the Devas defeated the Asuras in battle. Devas were highly delighted and proclaimed that it was their prowess that enabled them to defeat the Asuras. To remove their egotism, the Lord went to the Heavenly region in the form of a Yaksha. Seeing a wonderful form, the Devas deputed Agni to ascertain who that was. Agni went up to him and in the course of conversation Agni made him understand that he was the all-consumer, that he could burn everything to ashes. The Yaksha then threw out a blade of grass and asked Agni to consume it. Agni tried his best, but could not even dry the grass. Discomfited, Agni came away. Then god wind appeared before the Yaksha. Hearing the god's description of

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himself as the great-carrier, the Yaksha asked him just to move that blade of grass. In-spite of all his might, the great god got worsted in his efforts. When the other gods also were quite powerless to perform their own functions, Indra grew thoughtful. He meditated. Then the Mother of the Universe appeared before him and told him that the Yaksha was none other than Brahman, that it was the power of Brahman alone that bestowed power to the Devas and that of themselves they were nothing. Knowing this Indra and the Devas shed their vanity and egotism.

This false pride we see in the world even to day. One Kuppuswamy joins the police-force as a constable. He has no education, no culture, no refinement, yet, even high personages respect his orders. Kuppuswamy raises his hand; at once the cars of the big-big stop. Kuppuswamy misleads himself to think that it is all due to his own power. It does not occur to him that people respect the authority of the police-force, a little of which is vested in him, for the time being. The haughty and wicked Kuppuswamy is thrown out of the police-force and becomes again the old Kuppuswamy. There is no power as my power. I am Kuppuswamy. It is the power behind me that works through me. However I thank you once more for your kindness. May Bhagavan bless you all.

ADDRESS AT THE NIKHIL BANGA RAMAKRISHNA MAHOTSAVA

The following address was delivered by Swami Nirmalanandaji Maharaj, on the 3rd March, at the 3rd day's sitting of the Religious Convention, under the auspices of the Nikhil Banga Ramakrishna Mahotsava, held at the 3rd Sri Gopinath Jiu temple of the Sovabazaar Rajbati :—

Gentlemen and friends, Ramakrishna has become a homeword to every Bengalee, nay, it has become a homeword throughout the length and breadth of the

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whole of India, over and above that, perhaps to several countries beyond India.

HIS MESSAGE.

What is Ramakrishna and his message ? His life and teachings you have already heard from the various eminent and learned speakers this evening. I do not like to add anything to that with the exception of a little experience that this humble speaker has gained by coming in touch with that wonderful personality, whose spiritual fire was burning day and night constantly under the Panchavati, a little less than a century back, and whose 98th Birthday Anniversary we have all gathered here this evening to celebrate. It was a little over five decades back that this humble speaker had the good fortune to visit the temple of Dakshineswar and to fall at his holy feet and receive his blessings.

WHAT IS PARAMAHAMSA ?

What is Paramahamsa ? People called him Paramahamsa. In my child-mind, in my imagination, I pictured a Paramahamsa as a man with matted locks, long beard and ashes smeared all over his body and I thought that he will be a very serious and grave man. What I found quite unexpectedly was that he was none of that ; he was neither a Yogi nor a Sadhu or Paramahamsa or anything of the kind. Though he was a little advanced in years at the time, to all outward appearance he was a veritable child of nature. With no pretentions, no poses and no assumed airs in him, he appeared nothing but a simple child of nature—a child whose heart and soul were never sophisticated by the culture, education and civilisation of the modern days. His mind refused to take any polish of the modern system of education. He was absolutely illiterate in that sense. But he was deeply steeped in the spiritual wisdom of the Rishis of old as was revealed unto him by his Sadhanas. The whole nature was his only book which he did not fail to closely read, every page of it. That was all. I could

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not know his caste, as he did not wear a Holy Thread. I could not understand whether he was a Sadhu as he was not apparently grave but would seem to smile apparently at nothing. He would be smiling sometimes with a vague look not at all serious. You can well understand it if you happen to look at the eyes of an infant, how the infant looks vague and blank with smiles on its lips. Then, when at times he appeared serious, he seemed to plunge deep into very serious thoughts and meditation and his whole appearance and mode would completely change. It was in fact, a riddle to me how to study him and what to know of him. Sometimes he would behave just like a little child. I will now relate to you a little story about him. Once a little ant stung his finger. He was under the pain of that sting and was almost beside himself and crying just like a child. One of the temple Pujaris seeing his childlike nature persuaded him, as he would have done to a little child to turn away his mind from the thoughts of pain, and asked him to put his wounded finger into the ant hole in order that the ant might draw out the poison of the sting, so that he would be free from pain, and he actually placed his finger there. Now, you see, the man who had controlled his everything, including his senses and every grain of his whole body and the organisms, had been quite beside himself as an ordinary human being with the pain of the sting of an ant, and, to be relieved of the pain, acted according to the dictates of the Pujari just like a little child. This fully demonstrates the child-like nature in him. At the very next moment however, he could have been found talking to great Pandits and learned men like Keshab Chandra Sen and Pratap Chandra Muzumdar. These two diametrically opposite characteristics in his nature seemed to me to be a special phenomenon of the spiritual domain.

WHAT HE WAS.

We do not know what he was. We cannot identify him with any particular form of religion. He was

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neither a Hindu, nor a Muhommadan, nor a Christian, nor a Zorastrian, but he was all and also beyond all. He was just the essence of all religions. He was the embodiment of the spirit of all religions. He was the real vitality of all religions, nay, he was the personification of that eternal spirit of religions.

SANATANA DHARMA.

Just now a friend of mine told you about "Sanatana Dharma." Its literal meaning is religion eternal—the truth that is existing eternally. Our old, old Rishis have told us that they have actually come into contact with that spirit that was revealed unto them, and they became the embodiment of the spirit themselves. That was their realisation, and they never claimed that to be their religion, but that it was eternal truth. So Ramakrishna, I think, was the personification embodied in flesh and blood of such an eternal truth. Consequently, he was the vitalizer of all religions. He did not belong to any particular form of religion but he was the concretised channel through which the eternal truth finds its way. We cannot, therefore, identify him with any particular form of religion. We cannot call him a Paramahamsa or a great saint or a great Avatar; he was none of that, but was truth and truth itself manifested in a concretised form. In fact, as days rolled on, I gained the experience later on that he was the very sustenance of all religions and that we cannot monopolise him. He is the eternal sustainer and vitalizer and, in fact, the vitality itself of all religions. Of course, we, in Bengal, must be very proud because his nativity was here but we cannot claim him as solely belonging to us. He is the universal moon, uncle moon, belonging to the child born with a gold spoon in his mouth. But still we do monopolise him as we are, after all, human beings. We say He is our own; the Americans say 'He is our own', and the Muhommadans also say 'He is our Ramakrishna'. This is due to the fact that Ramakrishna was neither a Hindu, nor a Christian nor a Muhommadan,

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but that he was all and beyond all. This is my humble view of Sri Ramakrishna.

VITALIZING RELIGION.

Next thing, I think, Ramakrishna had come at a particular stage when we were going to lose faith in almost all religions. He, therefore, came to vitalize the religions. He took all the various existing forms of religion into his own spiritual laboratory where he tested them and found the results of every religion to be one and the same. This he derived not by intellectual comprehension nor by making a comparative study of all religions, but by his own experience through actual realisation. He was, therefore, a living demonstration of the eternal truth.

The next thing I want to tell you, gentlemen, is that at this particular age there were peacelessness, disharmony, sectarian views and various other elements that were disquieting, and it is to settle this order of things and to bring about peace and harmony that Sri Ramakrishna came here. His cause is not merely national but international. He came to bring about peace in every home of every country of the whole world. He is the peace-harbinger of the whole universe.

STRIKING PERSONALITY.

When we study the history of our ancient religion and of the Rishis, we find one striking fact that whenever there was any penomenal ruffle in the domain of spirituality, there, ever appeared on its horizon a striking personality—a personality that is nothing but concentrated energy of spirituality to settle the disputes and to bring about peace, showing the underlying unity of various forms of creed, sect and cult. Thus we find in the Vedas "Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti" i.e., "God is one, men call Him by various names."

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In the pouranic age we find the advent of another harmoniser showing the underlying unity in the then existing forms of religion in the person of Lord Sri Krishna. And now at the present age and at this particular critical juncture when all the different forms were fighting against each other, and when the atmosphere of spirituality was dinning with disharmony, disquietude and peacelessness, a similar wonderful man in the person of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was born away in the interior of a village of Bengal to re-establish the ancient religion of India, namely the Sanatana Dharma, and it is he who brought the same spirit of harmony of all religions as did the Rishis of old.

THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

OF

SWAMI NIRMALANANDAJI MAHARAJ

At the Fourth Session of Burma Provincial Hindu Conference on 15th April 1933.

Salutation to Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna !

You have, Sisters and Brothers of Burma, placed upon my shoulder a gave responsibility by making me to preside over the present session of the Burma Hindu Provincial Conference. The times are hard. Institutions are in a melting pot. And I am no politician. I neither understand the politics of the boundaries nor can I persuade myself to believe that a political system which recognises the full rights of man as a member of society, which aims at the welfare of all, and which therefore refuses to grant special favours and privileges to any particular group or community can be rightly expected from without. National constitution must be evolved from within the people, from within the nation itself ; since superimposed benevolence cannot reconcile men to one another nor

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develop the highest and the best within them. I am afraid, therefore, whether I shall be able to discharge my duties by the Conference which is held at a momentous time to the entire satisfaction of all who may be concerned in it. However, I offer to all my sincere thanks for the honour you have extended to an humble child of Sri Ramakrishna who came for the salvation of ourselves and emancipation of Humanity.

Danger Ahead.

Sisters and Brothers, the times, as I have said, are indeed hard. We are on the threshold of a great transformation, a mighty revolution, so to speak. Burma, Brahmadesha of the Puranas and the Vedas; Burma, the stronghold of the sons of Buddha the incarnation of our Vishnu; Burma which has ever been the Eastern Mouth-piece of the Great Virat of India to speak to 'the Far-east'; Burma which has ever been the great 'Key-stone' of the magnificient edifice of Greater India comprising Ceylone, Java, Sumatra, Cambodia, China and Japan; that Burma is not simply threatened with a territorial dissociation from the scheme of the future administration of India. The whole of India is threatened with a cultural extinction under the dead weight of the modern, mechanical and commercial civilisation of the Occident built upon a 'Law of Progress' which works not by evolution but by destruction under the guidance of a disintegrating individualism.

The Blunder.

Indeed, modern India is so full of what is termed 'Progress and Reform' that it would like to uproot the 'Family' and everything upon which the foundations of Hindu society and civilisation depend. The whole structure of Hindu society and civilisation is the direct product and outcome of the exercise of the communal principle of human life and conduct in the affairs of men and institutions. But that structure has been unremittingly, indiscriminately and unscrupulously attacked under the inspiration of the individualistic

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principle of social progress which forms the very foundation of the society and civilisation of the modern West. In fact the debate or rather conflict has already begun. The New is striving against the old; the West against the East; Saxon Individualism against Indian Communalism. It is forgotten that man has as much a communalist personality as an individualist personality. In consequence, the individual should not be regarded except as forming an integral part of its community which is but an organic unity. If, therefore, in the place of the individualistic,—the mechanical principle of social progress, the communalistic or the evolutionary principle had been applied in the affairs of our people by those who had the making of India in their hands for more than a century and a half, then the blunder of introducing and enforcing the Western ideals of Individualism in a country whose whole civilisation was built on communal ideals of life, would never have been made. For, the communal systems of India were a genuine product of the Soil, and not the outcome as in Europe of a theme of feudal life forming part of a gigantic military regime.

Consequences of Blunder.

But the blunder, however mischievous it might be, has been committed. In consequence, the standards of the home, even the criteria of rearing our children have been undergoing a radical change, the leisure cccupations of youth, always symptomatic of any age, have not only become frankly utilitarian or frivolous but have often been found to be beyond the borders of what was once considered as decorous, and our beliefs even in things which were accepted as axiomatic by the Past have been wholly undermined. Indeed, Hindu society which should have been a universal school by this time for mutual unfoldment and enrichment, has become an ignoble pillory for labouring spirits. Reciprocity amongst us is now almost an unknown quantity and co-operative commerce a feud to the knife.

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Tackle the Revolution,

In fact Hindu society is passing through a great transformation, a mighty revolution, both in its ideals and outlook on life. But it is important to bear in mind that a period of revolution affords opportunities as much for social evolution and progress as for involution and retrogression. It all depends upon the nature and character of the guidance the thinking class of any cultural group, can give to the social and religious movements which engage the attention of the people in such a period. It is stupid to think that in such period of rapid transformation our religion, our morality, or our family should escape the criticisms which are being applied to all other institutions of the world. It is, therefore, not by seeking to shield the forms and institutions of Hiduism from criticism and attack; but by seeking to guide criticisms into right and rational channels that we can expect to develop our spirituality and best serve the society to advance thereby the cause of religion and humanity.

The Threefold Crisis.

Indeed, unless the revolution which we are passing through, is given a rational guidance, there is every likelihood of Hinduism and the whole fabric of our civilisation reverting to a lower plane of intellectual, social and spiritual values. It is true that some attempts were made here and there to lift morality and religion to a higher social and rational plane by the works of different sects and communities of worshippers within the fold of Hinduism in their own way. But in the face of the spreading group-selfishness, caste clashes, and communal wars or sectarian conflicts, it is difficult to believe that the past attempts were successful in finding out values which are adequate for a basis of harmonious human living together. We must face facts, however ugly they might appear. The way in which things are rapidly proceeding can, as the late Swami Vivekananda once observed, result either,—

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First, in the combination of other castes than the Brahmana to evolve a new religion like that of Buddhism in ancient time, or

Secondly, a new religion which is more adapted to the requirements of modern life, will come from the world outside to make a sweeping conquest of the children of the Soil, or

Thirdly, a radical irreligion and sheer atheism will soon become dominant amongst the more advanced classes of thinkers in our society while the rest will adopt either Christianity or Islam, to the extinction of Hindu civilisation.

The Ethics of the Gita.

A great crisis, therefore, confronts us all as members of Hindu Society from all points of view, namely, spiritual, social and political. The crisis has been brought about as much by the rapid development of Science and spread of Democracy amongst the nations of the world as by our failure to adapt our forms and institutions to the circumstances of the times, to the needs and conditions of modern civilisation. Adaptation is the progressive factor in human as well as in social evolution. Non-adaptation spells stagnation, deterioration and death. It is by adaptation to the exigencies of the successive ages,—Satya, Treta, Dwapara and Kali, by a dialectic process, that Hindu society and civilisation survived the revolutions of empires. For, what are the Vedas, the Smritis, the Puranas and the Tantras but the re-statements of the eternal ideas and ideals of Hinduism teaching us the lines we have to follow in our adaptation to the demands of the modern times, to the newer conditions of our life. By "adaptation" I do not mean a blind surrender to the forces that be. By it I mean a controlling mastery over the existing forces in and around us,—using, utilising, and modifying or rejecting them, as the case may be, in the interest of the goal or ideal we all have in view. In adaptation to the newer

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conditions of life, it is the ideal or the goal that must be kept always in view. The moment we forget our goal, says an exponent of the Law of Progress, the moment we lose sight of our ideal, the vitalizing principle of our social life, the purpose of our social activities, that very moment our society must be taken to have suffered a partial death, has become relatively non-living, or inorganic so to speak. If the forces and factors wherein we find ourselves, help us in the achievement of our goal, in the attainment of our ideal, we accept them, cherish them and make the best use of them. If they are partially helpful, we do not accept them in *toto*, but we try to modify them and take from their good and reject what is evil in them. But if they are found positively harmful, if they present an ideal of life and thought which is the very reverse of our own, well, in that case, there is no other alternative than an nncompromising warfare. "And if, in the last resort, the victory is not ours, the very defeat itself would be of high moral discipline and of high spiritual glory". Indeed, this is the Hindu ethics as taught in the Grand Song of our Lord.

Revive Religious Ideal.

Now it is agreed on all hands that India has a soul of its own, that Hindu society has a particular theme to follow, an ideal which may be called as the very breath of its life and which may well be denominated as the principle of its social progress. "Each nation," said the late Swami Vivekananda, "like each individual has one theme of life which is its centre, the principal note round which every other note comes to form the harmony. In one nation political power is its vitality as in England, artistic life in another. In India religious life forms the centre, the key-note as it were of the whole music of her national life ; and if any nation attempts to throw off its national vitality, the direction which has become its own through the transmission of centuries, that nation dies, if it succeeds in the attempt. And, therefore, if you succeed

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in the attempt to throw off religion and take to pure politics or any other thing as your centre, the vitality of your national life, the result will be that you will be extinct."

Some Objections.

But, have we been true to our ideals? Have we followed our own line of national activities? There has been placed before the people the political policy and programme of divorcing our national life from its spiritual basis, to dissociate religious motives and impulses from our national activities and to build the civilisation of India anew on secular lines and materialistic ideals. Indeed, the aspiration of modern India is to exalt the secular point of view, the secular conception of life as a national ideal. It is contended by the exponents of this view that an all powerful spiritual ideal would by its predominance bring in things and modes of life which would impede the growth of our national power and prosperity. Any emphasis, therefore, that would be laid on the spiritual ideal of the people in the re-constitution of Indian nationalism should be forthwith discountenanced.

Objections Examined.

But the fear so expressed is simply precocious. The history of Buddhism in Ceylon, India and China, as observed a scholar in history, proves beyond doubt that for centuries before and after the Christian era the dynamic power of the forces of religion showed itself no less on the material side of national activities than on the purely spiritual plane. The material advancement of India during the regime of Buddhism or Muhommedanism was forwarded not by the exaltation of the secular conception of life as the national ideal; but by bearing aloft the standard of religion while associating and regulating with it and by it the secular and material welfare and activities of the children of the Soil. The result was the growth of a unique and powerful civilization, powerful for good in promoting

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the spiritual life among the people and powerful for good also in forwarding their best material interests. It is wrong, therefore, to take the problem of the advancement of religion and secular welfare of the people as two distinct problems essentially different from each other. They are but two aspects of one and the same problem of life and living.

Politics of Service Needed.

Besides, the people of India nurtured for ages on spiritual traditions, cannot rightly work on purely secular and political lines like the people of the West. Really you cannot expect "the Ganges to flow back to her icy bed and begin a new course." Even that were possible for the Ganges, "it would be impossible for this country to give up her characteristic course of religious life and take up for herself a new career of politics or something else." This explains clearly how all our past attempts to educate, awaken and work up the masses through politics have miserably failed, how we have failed to adapt the forms and institutions to the exigencies of modern times. It is high time, therefore, to return to the sources of our own being. If reform is needed in any sphere of our life, It must be done by and through the fundamental principles of religion. If we need politics, we must have the politics of service to humanity. Indeed, if we are to maximise co-operation between the different groups of our people in the attainment of our common ideal, the whole spirit of our political life must be changed. Instead of a politics of power and privilege, instead of setting before the people a pagan programme of self-interest, material satisfaction and brute force which permeate through and through the great fabric of Western civilisation, we must have a politics of service and worship of humanity. And the end must be sought, of course, through the unfoldment of the highest and the best in the people of all castes and communities within the society to begin with Brahmanisation or levelling up of the down-trodden is

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predominantly a social ideal of the Hindus. All men are Shudras by birth. It is by the investiture with holy threads that they become the twice-born. When they are educated in the Vedic lores, they are known as the Vipras. But the Brahmana, socially speaking, is only he who knows Brahman.

Practical Vedanta.

The elevation of the Depressed to the dignity of the Divinity, this spiritualisation of the secular and social outlook on life of the people, is neither in conflict with the best traditions of Hinduism nor inconsistent with the highest ideals of patriotism that we can conceive of; for, the ends of life itself, in our view, being a life of service and worship, loyalty to humanity does not weaken one's loyalty to one's own country and society. It is in this way that religion and patriotism most wonderfully blend in the Philosophy of Practical Vedanta which emphasises on the actual realisation of God in the embodied souls moving about us. Indeed, it is, to explain in the language of a Western scholar, "the one Brahma who is the Supreme Blissful experience and who appears in the form of Man with a life of mingled pleasure and pain." The Adwaita Vedanta posits one Universal Consciousness which polarises intself into static and dynamic, into subject and object as the positive and negative poles of one and the same reality. In Param Samvit this "I" (Aham) and "This (Idam) are indistinguishably mingled in the Supreme Unitary Experience." In Adwaita Vedanta, therefore, the Individual life and the World-life are rolled as it were in One. And so the Vedantists, when eating, drinking, or discharging any other function of life, they do so by believing and declaring, "That Thou Art", "That am I", "I am Brahma", "I am Shiva", "I am Bhairava". It is not merely the separate, the detached individual that acts and enjoys. It is the Supreme Brahma, the Supreme Shiva who does so in and through him. A man with such mentality recognises that his life and the play of its activities are not things apart,

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to be held and pursued egotistically for its and his own separate sake, as though the enjoyment was something to be seized from life by his own unaided strength and with a sense of separateness; but his life and all its activities are conceived as part of the divine action in nature manifesting and operating in the form of man. He realises in the pulsing beat of his heart the rhythm which throbs through, and is the sign of, universal life. With the Adwaitin, therefore, to neglect or deny the needs of the body, of the society, and of every other thing and being in the universe, is to neglect and to deny that greater life of which it is but part and to falsify the Great Doctrine of the Unity of all, of the ultimate identity of Matter and Spirit and of God and Man.

The Four Noble Ends

Now it as clear from what has been said hereinbefore that the ultimate ideal which Hindu civilisation kept before itself, is essentially spiritual and empirically social. It is natural, therefore, that the basis of the Hindu Society should be deliberately laid on the 'Cult of the Spirit', on the pursuit of the aims and purposes which are distinctly spiritual or religious. Indeed, the one object which the great builders of our society had before them was how to erect that kind of civilisation which would help in building up and maintaining an environment for the easier unfoldment and expression of the highest and the noblest that is akin to Divinity in humanity. For man does not live for the bread alone, not for mere animal living, but for self-expression, for happiness (Sukham). Hindu psychologists hold that happiness which man seeks in and through his struggle for self-expression is fundamentally of two kinds. Of these the one is innate, increate, or non-derivative (Akritim) which is known by the name of 'Moksha' or the Bliss of Liberation both here and hereafter; and the other is artificial, created or derivative. It is known by the name of 'Kama' or 'Secular Pleasure', the third of the Four Noble Ends of Human life. By the word 'Kama' here is not meant 'Lust' in popular sense of the term; for the

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Lord described Himself in the Divine Song as 'Kama' which is not in opposition to 'Righteous conduct' (Dharma). As such it means and includes all forms of civic, political and social well-being.

Dharma or Order.

But the attainment of either of the above two Ends is impossible without the acquirement of 'Dharma'. *Dhrama* is that *Law* which holds together the physical and the social worlds in order. 'Law and Order' are, therefore, the implications of 'Dharma'. Without this 'Law and Order', as Sir John Woodroffe rightly interprets, both the world and the society would fall into pieces. As such Dharma is opposed to *Adharma* or Disorder which cannot possibly exist everywhere at one and the same time. It can exist only locally for the time being, since Order or Dharma must, from the very nature of things, re-assert itself, sooner or later. And in fact this is exactly what is meant when we say, "By the Grace of Lord, things will be all right; Righteousness will surely and ultimately prevail". But one thing which clearly emerges out of this is that the Law of Righteousness as implied and involved in the social application of Dharma is not any Law which is imposed from without. It is in the very nature of men to live harmoniously together in certain relations. And these are not arbitrarily imposed from without by any law-giver. They are the consequences of the working of a principle of Reason by which all men are distinguished from the rest of the animal world. This principle of Reason is held by the Hindus as the primary source of knowledge and final criterion. Vasishta says, "Even a Shastra of purely human origin should be accepted, if it is comformable to reason. Anything else which is unreasonable, even though it be the word of the Rishi, should be rejected by one who follows reason. The word of a boy, if reasonable, should be accepted. Anything unreasonable should be rejected as of no more count than a blade of grass, even it be uttered by the Lotus-born (Brahma) himself." (Vide the Mumukshu

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Kanda, Book II, Chapter 18, vv. 2-3). So it is explained how a man of religion feels himself bound (by Dharma), as it were to all beings; while the irreligious one is he who egotistically considers everything from his own narrow, limited self and interests without any regard for his fellowmen in the world at large. Indeed, all religions are agreed on the essentials of righteous conduct. All hold that selfishness in its widest sense is the root of all sin and crime. In fact, Dharma, conceived as such, is but the moral attitude of man towards his universe.

Artha or Economic Freedom.

But man steeped in poverty cannot be expected to work along the lines of real *dharma*, to follow the path of Righteous conduct without which the attainment of 'Kama' and 'Moksha' is well-nigh impossible. For, material conditions of life, taken as a whole, primarily determine the changes in human thought and habits of life. Indeed, the primary motive force in any social change is the system of economic production and distribution of wealth which obtains in a country at a given time. To its needs, all other forms of individual and collective life must adjust themselves whether consciously or unconsciously. It is with a view, therefore, to that Economic freedom (Arthamimamsa) independent of which the achievement of the other ends is held well-nigh impossible for the most people, that mankind in this land of Jnanayoga and Karmayoga have been classified and organised on the basis of the economics of industry.

Indigenous Organisation.

The importance of the classification of the human units for the purpose of conjoint action in the attainment of economic freedom is nowhere disputed. The classification of human units as illustrated by the system of castes in the country was originally based upon the differences of the people in their culture, talent, tendency and ability, that is upon the necessary division of labour in the economic complexities of the situation of things. You cannot do away with the industrial organisation of

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the people for the attainment of economic freedom. In the matter of social reconstruction we, it is true, can conceive of equality of rights, opportunities and liberties for all ; but we surely cannot think of any equality of talents, functions or rewards. The attempt to abolish the industrial organisation from our society which is the necessary consequence of the classification of the people according to the nature of human industries, is, therefore, simply precocious. There must be a body of men as producers of raw materials ; there must also be another body of men to work upon the raw materials into finished products which in the present mechanical age coincides with factory labour. In this way it can be demonstrated that we cannot do away with that class of people also who render expert services to the society and who have the special charge of the higher interests of culture on its spiritual side. Indeed, the fundamental economic classes of our society viz , the Sudra, the Vaisya, the Kshtriya, and the Brahmana, there must be in every well-organised human association of highly evolved character. It is in consequence of the economic organisation of our society according to the nature of human industries that Hindu Society has not been a simple, unevolved, homogeneous structure. In fact Hindu Society is a highly evolved composite structure in consequence of its having had to take note of and allow for natural, cultural, traditional or functional differences among its members. Thus the highly evolved composite structure of Hindu society has been built up from the co-ordination of the different industrial groups on the basis of a natural unity in a communal brotherhood. It is held together by the whole organism obeying one law *i.e.*, by the allegiance of the component parts to a spiritual order of people who having renounced all profits and emoluments of the world were entrusted with the most sacred task of promoting Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. The economic organisation of Hindu society is, therefore, a marvellous institution to inspire the component groups to manage their own affairs in their

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own way, for the realisation of their personal, communal and common ends and ideals.

Communalism and Nationalism.

But there are people who do not see eye to eye with us. First of all it is contended that three hundred millions of people divided into three hundred groups is fundamentally opposed to all principles of any united action. The free play of communal pride and jealousies only breed dissensions and discords between the different groups. In consequence, the communal organisation of the Hindu society has been detrimental to the growth of Indian nationality. Differences being parent of antagonisms, the aim of collective moral progress in a people can only be reached when these differences are obliterated in the interest of a dead level of political unity. The doctrine of sameness, homogeneity and uniformity of beliefs and standards is, therefore, advocated as the one clue to an evolved moral life and social progress.

The Real Problem.

But our friends forget that the real problem before the world is not to find ways and means either in the form of 'Class war' or any other thing for the transformation of things and beings into one homogeneous whole which is akin to universal dissolution; but for the co-ordination of the differences of races, religions and cultures and the like obtaining within the territorial limits of a country and to bring them as well under some ordered system of society where all the vital differences of race, religion and the like would be preserved only to make them helpful and contributory to the general good of the whole society and humanity.

The Principle of Nationality.

And as regards the spirit of communal pride and its attendant evils, however gigantic they might be, in the composite organisation as complained of, they are possible only so long as the industrial groups making up the

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whole structure are not informed and vitalized by a principle of common life, a common object of self-interest which is their cement and bond of union. And what is this cement and bond of union ? It is no other than the Principle of Nationality. If sufficient care were taken by the exponents of Indian thoughts and leaders of the public movement to bring home to the different component groups that they have two objects to pursue in their social life, viz., the special self interest of the group and the general common interest of the whole society whereof they are but organs, then the free play of communal jealousies and the like would have long been suppressed for united action in a common cause. It is a truism to say that all organisation, industrial, political, social or religious are sure, in the long run, to produce evils of gigantic character if the units and parts of the institutions were not united to one another by the lively presence of some common object in which they were more or less interested. The argument that a communal scheme of life is contrary to the doctrine of evolution which means going forward and not backward, does not hold good in India amongst a people like the Hindus. And I, on the contrary, hold that evolution need not be identified with Darwinism. Europe from this point of view is still in the Stone Age in politics. A good deal of European civilisation with its barbarous weapons of destruction may well be described as retrogade. Indeed, the civilisation of Europe cannot be termed as such an unqualified success that we should be ready to subvert the tried system of India. Besides, any attempt at this by wholly ignoring the natural socialism of the Soil, will eventuate in discontentment, poverty and crime.

A few Suggestions.

In all gravity, therefore, Sisters and Brothers of Burma, I say that if India were to grow strong, survive in the struggle for existence, and fulfil her mission in the comity of nations, she will have to draw inspirations from the past history of her activities in the varied fields of her life and culture. The history of the cultural and

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social emancipation of France, Spain, Germany and Italy teaches the way we should follow in the assertion of our national individuality upon the environment. In the socio-religious reconstruction of India we shall have no doubt to take a firm stand on the threshold of the Scientific Present; but we will have to review as well the Past and forecast the Future. It is in this way by establishing an organic correlation with the Past and in friendly co-operation with the dominant Present that we shall have to give births to newer forms of life and institution. So a double conquest at every step we shall be making in the onward march of our social evolution.

Revive Religion—First Duty.

Our *First* and foremost duty, therefore, is to restore religion in every act we do in the varied fields of our life. For, activities divested of religious motives would be destitute of vision and enthusiasm for our people by reason of their being reduced as mere expediency. We have to bear in mind always that we shall have to confront a world of opposing forces with hope, courage and faith on the one hand, and with loyalty, goodwill and devotion to our fellow men on the other, if human life is to be harmoniously lived together. It is a mistake to suppose that religion is responsible for the social evils we happen to be surrounded with. "All the reformers," said Swami Vivekananda, "made the serious mistake of making religion accountable for all the horrors of priestcraft and degeneration and went to pull down the indestructible structure. And what was the result? Failure." It is high time for the religious leaders of our day to grasp in full the social significance of religion, drop their theological disputations, sink their petty sectarian differences and give religion the positive humanitarian trend which civilisation demands. They must combine and emphasise on the Universal aspects and values of religion which only exists for man and not man for religion.

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Educate the Masses.

The *Second* thing we have to do is to bring education to every home, even to those who are held by the bigots of the society as beyond the very pale of human intercourse. In the days of hoary antiquity the leading exponents of Hindu thought felt the necessity of educating every human being without exception. Even the distant "Chandala" had the right to education. In the Twenty-sixth Chapter of the Yajurveda it is enjoined that "the blissful Vedic knowledge should be imparted to all—the Brahmanas, the Kshatriyas, the Sudras, the Vaisyas and to the so-called 'untouchable, the "Charanas." Later on when the Vedas became a sealed book to the women and the Sudras downwards, the Epics were written, the Puranas were compiled and the system of *Kathakata* was introduced for the education of the masses. Even ten years back the 'Pallis' of Bengal villages teemed with primary schools or 'Pathasalas' where not only reading and writing were taught; but lessons on mathematics up to the standard of 'Shubhankari' were imparted to give to the people at large a workable education, the 'Tols' having been reserved for higher education. But where are those 'Pathasalas' now? Do the Primary Schools set up under modern patronage fulfil the purpose? Can we not now form a Social Conscription so formulated whereby every educated Hindu must have to teach at least for an hour or two every day some five or seven boys or girls of the neighbourhood without fees? If some such scheme is evolved out then the problem of educating the masses will be solved in less than five years. The institution of 'Tols' should also be so reconstituted as to impart Scriptural knowledge to all classes of people within the Hindu fold. These reforms would not be very costly affairs if arrangements are made to levy educational duties from our worthies on the occasions of festivals, marriages and Sradha ceremonies in the families, the donors making it a point that they will contribute to the funds of

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those institutions only which have thrown their doors open for all earnest students whatever be their caste or creed within the Hindu fold.

A Movement for Artisan Class.

Along with the imparting of literary and religious education, provisions should also be made for giving the artisan classes of the country a technical education to make them hold their own against the competitors in the markets. A movement for the workmen and artisan classes of the country whose forefathers planted with their own hands the seeds of Hindu civilisation into the soil of India, is indeed the crying need of the hour. Intellectuals and technical experts should come forward to help in the matter of ameliorating the material conditions of the Industrial classes along the lines of their traditional cultures with necessary variations of course to suit modern requirements. A mere creation of demands for indigenous goods in the market will not help the artisan classes ; for capitals will combine to oust the artisan classes from the field of their own vocational activities.

Guard the "Family".

Thirdly, we must seek to impress upon the people by persistent propaganda work that each caste is good and great in its own sphere. The system mitigates the rigours of competition and tends to solve in a greater degree the problems of unemployment and bread which press for immediate solution. But every attempt in a peaceful way should be made to do away with the privileges which attach to caste. In Europe the Individual is the social unit ; but in India it is the caste that happens to be the social unit, while the 'Family' is the communal unit of the society. So in returning to the sources of our own being, we must guard the 'Family' which is but a form of communal association against disruption by the introduction of the ideas and ideals of Individualism which is a disintregating force. Europe is suffering from an excess

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of Individualism in matters of "Family-life'. And we must take a lesson from it.

Woman and Society.

Fourthly, the question of 'the Family' brings in the question of 'Women in Hindu Society'. But the question might be simplified by the interrogatories,—Has woman like man a primary, individual and responsible existence? Or—She as a reproductive medium, as a wife, mistress or mother of children, is merely a secondary personality with derivative responsibility? If woman is taken to represent a primary existence with all the responsibilities of a man in the family, she must be allowed to choose her own husband in her own way and to select her manner of living according to her own best wishes. But if it is maintained that women in general deserve well of the social organism but they are not responsible people in the family, their responsibility being derived from the husband or from the children they bear to them, we open the door to all the abuses of the Past. Although the problem is a pressing one, it cannot be solved by man. The woman kind should be sufficiently educated to solve their problem in their own way. We men, as Swamiji said, really cannot decide things for them. But the question is whether woman is really endowed with a derivative personality and consequently with no responsibility of her own in the scheme of Hindu civilisation? From the life-history of Gargi, Maitri, Lila, Lilavati, Madalasa and a host of others, it is clearly seen that women in ancient period were recognised as leaders of thought and movements. Not only was a woman recognised as the Goddess of Learning but the daughter of Rishi Ambhirna was recognised by the ancient as the revealer of the Great Devi Sukta of the Rigveda (Vide Rik. V Mandal 10, Sukta 125). Indeed, it was really fitting that a woman should proclaim to the world the Divine Motherhood on which Sri Ramakrishna laid so much stress. The Hymn says "I am the Sovereign Queen,

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the Treasury of all Treasures; the chief object of worship whose all-pervading self all Devatas manifest, whose birthplace is in the midst of the causal waters; who breathing forth gives form to all created worlds and yet extends beyond them, so vast I am in greatness."

Guard the Family—The Communal Unit.

Fifthly, family is the craddle of civilisation. It has furnished the very ideals which the Hindus in the past strove to realise in their wider social life. But the requirements of the Family for the good birth and proper rearing of children are sacrificed now-a-days for education, business and industry. This must be immediately guarded against. For without good family the flame of spirituality could not be kept burning in the world. Indeed, in proportion as the 'Family' is permeated by unselfish love and so made pure and stable, the flame of spirituality will mount higher.

Caste or the Social Unit.

Sixthly, from Communal unit we come to the Social unit in the scheme of Hindu Civilisation. When the Muhommedans first came to India, there were sixty crores of Hindus here. At that time the constitution of the society was so flexible and elastic that not only the Hindus took to sea voyages but carried trade to distant lands and climes. Yet they did not lose their caste. But their number dwindled into twenty crores towards the close of the Muhommedan regime. And with the dominance of Christian Imperialism here, a further two crores of Hindus adopted the faith and social polity of their rulers.

The process of conversion of the Hindus into other faiths still continues in other different parts of India. The *first* thing we have to do is to strengthen the hands of the Hindu Missionaries to enable them to work in these places of conversion and *secondly*

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provisions should effectively be made to take back into the Hindu fold those who left their mother-religion by Shudhi, initiation and the like as prescribed in the Shastras. If a woman of any caste could be purified by a Brahmana worshipper in *Kulachar* to sit with him in the religious congregation with an equal status, I, for myself, find no reason why in the ordinary social affairs, a member of our society who once out of folly or pressure left his religion, should not be taken back into our fold, if he or she really wanted to come back. So far my knowledge goes Hinduism does not condemn any body to eternal damnation here or herein-after.

Untouchability.

Seventhly, the removal of untouchability which has been eating into the vitals of the society. By the removal of untouchability, is not meant the fusion and assimilation of all castes into a homogeneous whole, into a uniformity of standards and beliefs. It simply means the removal of untouchability by a mere accident of birth which stands against their getting the same privileges in public places which the caste-Hindus get. Not only the public tanks and wells should be thrown open to their use; but also the temple-gates should be kept open for their offering worship to the presiding deities therein. It is unfortunate that people should be attributing political motives behind these sundry reforms of purely social character: but it shows that the possessing class enjoying certain privileges form the prolonged indifference of the people who lost all sense of corporate life under alien predominance would not surrender so easily. Indeed, as Harold Laski says, "the history of things like franchise, education, administration of justice, the laws of inheritance, of, that is to say, privilege in general, is not the history of its voluntary surrender in the West." "Had the people of England" remarked the late Mr. Gladstone, "obeyed the precept to exchew violence and maintain order, the liberties of this country would never have been obtained." The

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question of Temple-entry is not a question of the influence of gems, mantrams or medicinal herbs that it should be beyond the pale of human reason to solve it impartially for the enforcement in a peaceful way of social justice. Those who say it are mere enemies of social progress. The Institution of Maths and Temples are but the embodiments of the religious life of the Hindus. They are co-ordinate in importance with Hinduism itself. Only through the suitable organisation can the religious life of the people express itself and be developed in the mass of individuals. So matters should not be left where they are. The whole society must take the question up ; for, a cancer in one part of the social structure is sure to bring disease in other parts of the organism. In short, Hinduism must be Hinduised.

Concluding Remarks.

Indeed, Sisters and Brothers, it is for the Hinduisation of Hinduism that Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna came to the earth. Deeds always count for more than professions in human life. Sri Ramakrishna by his own *sadhana* has proven to the world that not only every religion is true and, therefore, there is no occasion for sectarian quarrels, but he also demonstrated in his life that every individual soul was an expression of an inward Divinity. And to him no *paria* was untouchable. He himself had cleansed the most filthy place by his long matted hairs to kill the egoism in him, if there were a bit of it, to stand in his way to the realisation of Brahma in everything. The Hindu daily declares, "I am the Deva and non other. I am Brahma who is beyond all grief. I am a form of Satchidananda whose nature is purity and liberty to an eternity." And yet we, in our daily practice, follow the 'religion of the kitchen.' Sri Ramakrishna taught us that so long we keep this 'Don't touchism' in our practical life, we remain bound hand and foot by the shackles of *Avidya* without the cutting asunder of which by *Vidyasakti* or the powers of knowledge,

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we cannot attain to freedom. This is true as in the spiritual world as it is in the social world. Now that India is entering upon a new stage of social evolution, a stage of awakened social consciousness, of higher social and ethical ideals, the antiquated authoritarian control which sprang from the suppression of one group by another in the growing complexities of social life, cannot be maintained. Hinduism must find a new basis for its social control. That new basis lies in the rational likemindedness, the intelligent purpose and will of individuals. It must seek its unity not through coercive authority but through the sympathetic understanding and intelligent purpose of the whole people forming the bulk of the population.

ESSENCE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS.

Disciple's Speech at Salem.

(From Madras Mail.)

"Ramakrishna Paramahamsa did not come to create new sects but to consolidate and vitalize the existing ones", observed Swami Nirmalananda (74), a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, delivering the Ramakrishna Centenary Address last evening in the local Ramakrishna Mutt. There was a large gathering of citizens. The Swami was presented with an address of welcome by the citizens of Salem.

THE ADDRESS

Revered Swamiji,

We, the citizens of Salem, desire to welcome you amidst us here on the auspicious occasion of the Centenary Celebration of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna.

You had the privilege of actually sitting at the feet of the Master and are, therefore, eminently fitted

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to carry the message of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa to the groping millions of the world. Like your revered Collegue, Swami Vivekananda, you possess an Indomitable zeal and an ardent passion for work.

Your Services to South India are invaluable. The existence of eighteen mutts in Tamil Nad and Kerala started and conducted under your guidance and inspiration is sufficient testimony to your zeal and perseverance in the cause of religious revival in this part of the country.

Salem has the proud privilege of being one of the centres of activity of the Ramakrishna Movement. Your occasional visits to this institution and your Inspiring talks during those occasions gave an impetus to the movement in this city.

Your labours for over twenty years in Kerala towards the uplift of the depressed classes have paved the way for the historic proclamation of His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore, throwing open the State Temples to all Hindus.

We once more express our pleasure in having you in our midst on this auspicious occasion.

We beg to remain,
Revered Swamiji,
Your affectionate devotees,
The Citizens of Salem.

Salem,
15—3—1937.

SWAMIJI'S ADDRESS.

Speaking about Sri Ramakrishna's greatness, Swami Nirmalananda added : "I never called him an Avatar. He is only a man. The spiritual fire he ignited under the sacred banyan tree (in the temple garden at Dakshineswar) radiated the spiritual light throughout the earth."

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Swami Nirmalananda pointed out that each nation had its own characteristic vital features which formed the backbone of that nation's life.

"In Europe we find commercialism as also militarism, whereas the real edifice of India is religion and all other improvements, etc., that we find in India are more a superstructural ornamentation than anything else.

Not for one Sect or Country.

"Sri Ramakrishna cannot be monopolised by any body of men," said Swami Nirmalananda. "Ramakrishna did not come to this world to add to the innumerable sects here. He came as Uncle Moon (as the moon is called by all the people in Bengal) and is common to all the people. Let me recall to you the verse in the Bhagavad Gita which says: 'Whoever with great devotion worship me I am in them and they are in me.' So said Lord Krishna. So is Ramakrishna, as all other great men of our land. They are for the whole of humanity and not for any sect or country alone. So I say Ramakrishna is not for Indians alone: his cause is not merely national but it is international.

"He came not to create any new sect but to vitalize the existing sect. The real essence of all his teachings was to transcend all religions. He is the very essence and abstraction of all religions and spiritual forms. How can abstraction create another sect in the world? Therefore, abstraction came to pervade all forms of religion with their sects and sub-sects and to vitalize and consolidate them. As an Indian we must be proud of him, but we cannot monopolise him.

"Change was inevitable, but care must be taken to see that only the form undergoes the change but not the real substance, added the Swami.

Consolidation of Sects and Religions.

"If we linger behind and cannot follow the trend of the times, we call ourselves orthodox," he remarked.

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"Even orthodoxy differs materially from time to time. Ramakrishna often said : 'Akbar's sovereign must be exchanged for the current coin of to-day.' In the Vedic times there were no Avataras and we worshipped only Fire. But now we worship many gods in the form of idols. That is good. Only things should not be thrown away but should be exchanged. Thus Ramakrishna's teaching appealed to all classes and religionists whether orthodox or heterodox. So long as creation exists there must be variety, and Ramakrishna devoted himself to vitalize and consolidate this variety of sects, religions, etc. He did not come to create anything new."

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SWAMI NIRMALANANDA

HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS

PART IV

LETTERS

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA.
BASAVANGUDI, BANGALORE.
31st March 1911.

MY DEAR Mr. NARAYANA PILLAI,

I am so glad to receive your very kind and interesting letter of 22nd instant and to know that you are all, by the blessing of Sri Gurumaharaj, doing perfectly well. I owe you an apology for not writing to you ever since I returned here. I was away in Madras, of late, to pay my respects to our Holy Mother. I stayed over there for a couple of days and prayed to Her to bless Bangalore with the dust of Her holy feet. She was gracious enough to grant our prayer and accordingly came over here on Friday morning last, the 24th of this month. She stayed here only 4 days to the joy and delight of many hundred Bhaktas (men & women).

I am leaving this for Madras tomorrow evening again to accompany Her up to Calcutta. I shall, most probably, return here by the end of next month.

I can hardly tell you how rejoiced I am to learn that the work that you have started, some six months ago, is growing so beautifully and steadily. The very name of Sri Gurumaharaj works such an inconceivable charm on the minds of pious souls that can, without

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doubt, be proved from the facts that you have delineated in your letter in connection with the Holy picture being presented by you. He is the saviour of this age, people of every sect, creed and cult will come to know of that as days will roll on. May He shower upon you all His choicest blessings and make you His instrument to administer joy and peace to the hearts of the suffering humanity over there is my sincere prayer.

I am extremely glad to know that our Bhakta Nilakanta is working with so much zeal for the cause of Sri Gurumaharaj. Blessed are they that live for others. Please convey my affectionate blessings to him and my hearty wishes for his success.

I believe when you visit Trivandrum you will try to give a push to the centre over there. I have a mind, Gurumaharaj willing, to go over there in May next.

I trust this will find you all in health and joy. With kind wishes and affectionate blessings,

Yours in Sri Ramakrishna,

NIRMALANANDA.

BULL TEMPLE ROAD.
BANGALORE CITY,
Dated 13th Sept 1911.

MY DEAR SREEJUT NARAYANA PILLAI,

I can hardly tell you how glad I am to receive and read your very kind letter of 8th instant. I thank you very heartily for the same.

It is quite human that the passing away of the great soul in the person of Swami Ramakrishnanandaji from amidst us would grieve us so deeply. It is an irrecoverable loss, but it is the will of Sri Ramakrishna and our human way of reading of the sad event will never help us to solve the question. There is a divine Hand in everything that takes place and behind all

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our movements. If we do not lose sight of that divine Agency, both in our matters of everyday life and in eventualities other than common, then alone we can possibly retain our equipoise undisturbed and also our beatifice peacefulness and not until then. Sooner or later, each of us when our term of work and duty will be over, will be sent for by Sri Ramakrishna.

We must always keep ourselves ready and prepared for his call. It may come any moment unawares. I am very sorry to learn that you lost your only brother by the end of last May who was so loving, beautiful and self sacrificing. May his soul rest in eternal peace and bliss, held in the loving arms of Sri Gurumaharaj.

It is indeed very gratifying to learn that the work of the association over there is pushing on so steadily and that our Bhakta Nilakanta is so enthusiastic adout it. May Gurumaharaj grant every success to it and may He enlighten the souls that come in touch with it.

Yes, it will give me great pleasure to meet you all at Haripad when I go over to Trivandrum and if it be convenient at all, I should also like to pay a visit to Tiruvella. I hope this will find you all in health, joy and peace.

With my love and kind wishes to yourself, Bhakta Nilakanta and other friends.

I am yours in Ramakrishna.

NIRMALANANDA.

Bull Temple Road,
Bangalore City.
7th Sept. 1915.

My dear Velu,

Yours of the 5th instant duly to hand. I am very glad to receive it and to learn all the pleasant news contained therein. I have had the pleasure of being already informed of your successful lecturing tour in

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very many places in the State of Travancore. I hope your enthusiastic and zealous activity will undoubtedly enable you to convass a very large number of subscribers and make the proposed "Prabuddhakeralam" successfully stand upon its own feet. May the Lord crown you with every success. It gave me much pleasure to learn that everything had been so arranged as to make it possible for the first issue of the magazine to see the Light on the 1st of Thulam.

I am very sorry to know that you could not manage to get leave for a year. I believe it is thousand times better to give up that wretched drudging in an unwholesome environment and going on rotting for an indefinite period. Work for the magazine which is none other but a real Karmayoga. Before renouncing, one should practically do some amount of good karma to purify one's heart. So your service will be doubly blessed. It will purify your heart and at the same time help the cause of the Mission. As for the little money that you need for your old mother and other dependents, God will provide and look to that when you sincerely serve His cause. When you are going to lay your whole life to the service of the Lord why should you be dilly dallying for some petty mundane concerns. Yes, Travancore will, through the Grace of Sri Gurumaharaj, be one of the best strong holds for disseminating and propagating His Glorious Message to mankind. Blessed are they that are privileged to serve His cause for they alone will attain to immortality and eternal peace. I believe the Travancore friends will surely look after your personal needs and also manage to give you necessary amount to help your mother. So be up and doing, and I wish you Godspeed and success.

Everything is going on smoothly here.

With kind thoughts and affectionate wishes.

Affectionately yours,

Nirmalananda.

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Bull Temple Road,
Bangalore City.
10th December 1915.

My dear Kurup,

Yours of the 14th instant duly to hand. Glad to know that you are all doing well and also to learn that the 2nd issue of the P. K. will be out by the 1st of next Malayalam month. I hope this time it will be free from those short comings which courted unfavourable comments from various quarters. I am very happy to find that Mr. Raman Menon is working at it so excellently and unsparingly. May Sir Gurumaharaj very generously require his unselfish love for and sincere devotion to His cause! He will, undoubtedly, make a very rapid stride in his spiritual progress.

I am not a little surprised to find a note in your letter which breathes a firmer faith in and dependence on a human personality than the power that guides all our movements from behind. The work of Ramakrishna does not depend upon this poor and frail Nirmalananda or on this or that personality. It is an unique privilege that He has very graciously granted to us to be of any service to Him or to His Mission. If any of us be so foolishly presumptuous as to dream of even, that His cause will suffer because such and such person has ceased to work, then, I believe, it will spell nothing but our absolute blindness of spiritual vision and total negation of faith in Him. So let us be glorified by serving Him, unquestioningly and let us always bear in mind that "to work we have the right and not to the fruits of that." If it be *our* work, then let it perish right away now, for it will serve no good to humanity. Let us always remember that it is the work of Sri Gurumaharaj and as such let us be blessed by dedicating ourselves to the service of His sacred Mission.

I am very glad that Mr. Raman Menon is going out to Vycome and Guruvayur to propagate the

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message of Sri Gurumaharaj by circulating the monthly over there. I wish him every success in his sacred undertaking.

Convey my best love and kindest wishes to all our friends at Quilon. Everything is going on in the self same way here. I trust this will find you all in health and joy.

With much love and affection.

Ever your well wisher.

NIRMALANANDA.

Bull Temple Road,
Bangalore City.
19th Nov. 1915.

My dear Bhaktan,

Your very affectionate note duly to hand and also the M. O. of 25 rupees for my passage expenses. I am very glad to know that you are doing well and everything is going on smoothly over there.

Let us have full faith in Sri Gurumaharaj and He will do His own work. How we shall succed in building an Ashrama where His services will be daily conducted for the upliftment of the local world, He will show us the way proper. His work does not depend upon a poor and frail fellow like my humble self, nor upon this or that personality. We are only 'Nimitamatram' and that we should always bear in mind whenever we are permitted the privilege to do a little service to His cause. Let us never lose sight of it and the rest the Lord will take care of. So let us not depend upon this or that mortal and build a very great hope that he alone can accomplish our end in view. Sri Gurumaharaj will do everything, if it so pleases Him.

I am very glad to know that you have sent the 'Maniratnamala' to the press for striking. It will, I hope,

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find an extensive reception at the hands of the people over there. Insert a line of advertisement of the same in the Prabuddha Keralam.

I have not heard anything definitely from our Seshadri as to the further development concerning the laying of the foundation-stone on the new site at Trivandrum. However if our Changanacherry friends are really earnest and are also ready, then I can start from here and finish the two works of foundation laying together. As for Trivandrum work, let our friends take their own time and we can put that off to some convenient future date. Let not the work of Tiruvalla and Changanacherry suffer because of the delay on the part of our Trivandrum friends. So by return of post let me know definitely when I am to go over there. I shall, then, inform you beforehand my exact date of arrival.

I am now living alone here. Vishuddhananda has gone to Madras a little over a week ago. He will go from there to the North to visit all the places of pilgrimage and will return, perhaps, after a long long time. The Brahmachari too, has left this about a couple of months ago. I am expecting him back by the end of this month. All matters regarding my programme of tour will be precisely made after his return.

Everything is going on smoothly here and I hope this will find all in health and joy.

With ever so much love and kind wishes.

Very affectionately yours,

NIRMALANANDA.

Bull Temple Road,
Bangalore City.
26th Nov. 1919.

My dear Bhaktan,

Very glad to receive your letter and to learn that you are all doing well and that everything is going on

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smoothly at the Ashrama. Very glad to learn that Mr.—has returned to the Ashrama and has a keen desire to devote the rest of his life in devotion and unselfish work. Yes, as you say, the people that are immersed in wordly pursuits can hardly appreciate or approve of such a course of life and as such it is no wonder that his house people will object to it. There lies a lot of obstacles on the way to blessedness, and unless a man possesses a firm determination he will hardly be able to free himself from the tangles of family and home environment. Unswerving faith in the cause of Truth and a steady and strong mind are the essential factors that will ensue success in every undertaking.

I am very sorry to learn that poor Narayanan has been deluded by his uncle R. Das. He was only a child when he was forced to accept the blind as his Guru by his uncle and other people. He did not know at that age what a Guru was, what Dharma was and what Sastras are. According to Shastras, he did not know at that time whom to seek as Guru and whom not. Do you think of any mistake committed by the instigation of others at an age when one was unable to distinguish between a false and a true one, and while one was unable to exercise his own discretion and reasoning and as such, one would stick on to the mistake and continue to do the same all the rest of one's life ? If one does so, it will be a horrible sin. "Blind leading the blind both fall into the ditch !" Sri Gurumaharaj used to say : "When one goes to buy earthen vessel from a potter's shop, one strikes it to find out by the sound whether it is all right or not. Similarly, before accepting anyone as a Guru, one must find out whether he is an imitation or a genuine one." If by mistake one has purchased a cracked one, will he not throw it away and try to get a good one ? It will be sheer foolishness to stick to the broken one. It will be sin to stick to a false Guru and be cheated and deluded one's whole life. Tell Narayan, to shake

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off all foolish notions from his head. They have been hammered down into his head by R. Das. Do not allow him to meet or talk to that black sheep convey my affectionate blessings to Narayan and my love and best wishes to Mr. Pathiyar.

With much love and kind wishes.

Very affectionately yours,

NIRMALANANDA.

Bangalore City.
15—1—22.

My dear Bhaktan,

I have received your letter duly and was glad to go through its contents. I am also very happy to learn that you are in perfect health and that you find the place so charmingly suitable for tapasya. Stay there as long as you like and enjoy its spiritual atmosphere to your heart's contents. Do not disturb your tapasya. When you think that you are very keen and eager to return to the sphere of karma, then alone it will be good for you to take up some kind of work and not until then. All well here.

With love and best wishes.

Affectionately yours,

NIRMALANANDA.

Bangalore City.
22nd Sept. 1916.

Dear Sir,

I shall be glad if Mr. C. Kurup goes to see his mother. I have never told him to deprive her of the happiness of seeing her only son once in a while when she wants it. Seeing one's own mother once in a while even if one becomes a Sanyasin is allowed

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by our Shastras and is not considered a violation of the Shastric injunction. So, please request him on my behalf to see his mother. With sincere wishes,

Very sincerly,

Yours in the Lord,

NIRMALANANDA.

Bull Temple Road,

Bangalore City.

18th Jan. 1916.

My dear and beloved Velu Pillai,

I am mightly rejoiced to receive your very loving letter of 6th instant and to read its very pleasant contents and also to learn that everything is going on over there smoothly well. Yes, the monthly is improving steadily and gradually. I hope through the grace of Sri Gurumaharaj it will gradually command a wider circulation and cater its enlivening pabulum to all spiritually poor, hungry and needy. It is an organ of His cause and as such it is bound to survive and fulfil its mission. Do not fear and have firm faith in Him and He will guide you all to the right course. Yes, off and on, there may, in course of its life rise rubs and ruffles of an overwhelming sort, as it were to suspend its very animative flow once for all; but things of the sort will, ere long; pass off, and it will shoot out its glory again, rejuvenated and resuscitated. "Prabuddha Keralam" is bound to awaken keralam.

Why should you be so much bothering about your own self? Mother knows the respective needs of each of Her children, and how and when to attend them. Leave everything unto Her and she will show you the way out when the time for it will come. She hardly needs be dictated upon so as to point out to Her for our timely fares.

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I am very very sorry to learn that Kurup is loosing flesh and getting thereby weakened very much. What is the matter with him? Why is he mortifying his little clayey lump so much? Is he going to thin into an astral form and hover over the air like the Theosophical Mahatmas? No, tell him on my behalf—no such foolishness. Sri Gurumaharaj does not want us to be "astralized", but to possess iron health and nerves of steel. Tell him to shake off all such chimeric nonsense from his brain and be a man of sense. Let him take some good and nourishing food and pick up more flesh and blood. Let him also take a little open air exercise. * * *

Convey my affectionate wishes to Dr. Tambi, Kurup, Mr. Raman Menon and all other friends over there.

With much love and kind wishes.

Yours very affectionately,

NIRMALANANDA.

Quilon,
20th June 1918.

Dear Mr. Krishna Pillai,

Your letter of 15th instant received by me yesterday. I am glad to note that you possess a religious bent of mind and that you have a strong desire to give up your present pursuit of life and devote the rest of it in the holy company and environ of Sadhus. Let me tell you at the outset that to lead the life of renunciation is very very difficult. It is not as easy as is generally supposed to be. It is beset with all sorts of temptations, hardships, privations and so forth. An impulsive and sentimentally weak mind finds it very hard to battle with its adverse surroundings. And then, after a certain length of time a terrible repentance overwhelms it and makes it keenly regret the wrong step it has chosen. I do not mean to discourage

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or disparage you. All I wish is that probe and sound your mind thoroughly, and be sure before you take a leap.

I am leaving this to-day for Madras and thence I go to Bangalore. If you find it convenient to come over to Bangalore some time later, say during your Onam holidays I shall then personally discuss over the proposal you have made and decide the course you should take. There is no hurry about the matter. Ponder over it deeply and then let me be informed before you decide to come over to Bangalore.

In the mean while let me wish you success and joy.

I am ever yours in the Lord.

NIRMALANANDA.

Bangalore City.

23rd July 1618.

Dear Sreejut Krishna Pillai,

Your letter of the 14th instant duly to hand. I am glad to note that your mother will not stand in your way. However when you come over here during the Onam holidays I shall discuss personally other matters with you as regards your proposal and then decide as to your intended trip to the Belur Mutt. In the meanwhile try to recuperate your health for it is of great consequence in the life of renunciation. A man of bad health and weak constitution will hardly succeed in achieving the end of his life. With sincere wishes for your strength and health.

Yours in the Lord.

NIRMALANANDA.

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Bangalore City.
2nd Nov. 1918.

My dear Krishna Pillai,

Your letter written some time back in October last reached here duly. I left this by the middle of September last for Travancore on some urgent work. I returned here only some five days back. Hence your letter was left unanswered all this while.

I have gone through the contents of your long letter and I find that you are again upset with your old notions of renunciation and vairagyam. I am afraid this sort of mental disturbance will hardly expedite your spiritual progress. Patience and perseverance lead to success in the long run. Importunity in rare instances makes us win our goal. I do not think I know any sounder suggestions than what I gave you when you were here during Onam days. Hence I should like to advise you to ponder over the same. If that satisfies you, well and good; if not, try to find out for yourself any other solution which will help you out of this poiseless condition.

Influenza is raging all over India. I hope your place is free from it.

Hoping this will find you in health and peace, with love and best wishes.

Yours in the Lord.
NIRMALANANDA.

Bull Temple Road,
Bangalore City.
4th Nov. 1920.

My dear Krishna Pillai,

Glad to receive your letter and to learn your safe arrival at your native place. I hope you will gradually

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recover your former strength and be your normal self again.

I do not know what to advise you under the existing troubled state of your domestic affair. First, there is the old and dependent mother; second, the straitened circumstances of the whole family. To leave them to their fate at such a pass would, it seems to me, be diabolically cruel and selfish, just for the sake of seeking one's individual salvation. I am really at a loss as to what suggestions would be beneficial under the existing conditions. So, I leave the whole thing to you. Use your own discretion and act according as your conscience bids. Weigh and sound your mind thoroughly. Be sure that the steps taken may not bring about repentance and smite your conscience, later on. To start out on a travel all through India at this juncture is entirely out of the question. It will be sheer waste of time, energy and money. First thing for the present you need is a strong and hardy body. When you get that you will, I am sure, recover your normal strength of mind. This is all that I can suggest now. As to the rest of your questions you will have to decide yourself.

Hoping this will find you better and stronger, with my love and best wishes.

Affectionately yours,
NIRMALANANDA.

Bull Temple Road,
Bangalore City.
1st March 1921.

My dear Sreejut Krishna Pillai,

Your letter of 23rd ultimo duly came to hand. I was out of station right after the receipt of your letter. I returned here only some four days ago. I am very

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glad to learn that you agree to the proposal I made in my last. I shall be glad to be informed as to when you will find it convenient to take up the work. At present I should like to advise you to help the work that has already been started. After your joining it, you can study the local conditions and then I shall be glad to be enlightened as to how the work could be run in a better way and what suggestions you should like to make for further improvements and any new additions. So, for the present I do not think you need undergoing a training in weaving. If that be necessary you can go in for it later on. Haripad is the centre of our work in middle Travancore, and it is in this Ashrama that you will have to work for the present. Before you go over to the place you will have to take a letter of introduction from me. * * *

With love and best wishes for your success,

I am very affectionately yours,

NIRMALANANDA.

Bangalore City.
26—12—25.

My dear N.

Very glad to receive your letter and to know that you have returned to Vattiyurcaw Ashrama. I am also very glad to know that yourself with others are doing well.

I am very sorry that you are labouring under a wrong notion. Do not get nervous because I sometimes point out some defects in you all, and that at times very hardly and roughly too. But, it is because of my eager desire to see you grow up the way that you all should. It is my intense love for you all and desire for your spiritual welfare that sometimes drives me to indulge in such scoldings as you all have experienced. They are all blessings, and for rectification. So do not be afflicted on that account and be cheerful.

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All are doing well here. Hope this will find you all in health and joy.

With affectionate blessings for you all,

I am as ever,

Very affectionately yours,

NIRMALANANDA.

Sri Sri R. K. Ashrama,

* * * Dinajpur, 2—8—25.

I shall not die until I finish off the little work that I have started. I will leave blessings enough for you all my dearest children—to continue, develop and extend Sri Gurumaharaji's work throughout the length and breadth of Kerala. You have my sincerest and heartiest blessings, my little heroes. You will work wonders in the cause of Gurumaharaj. By His grace and blessings you all will ever remain invincible.

Most affectionately,

NIRMALANANDA.

Prabuddhakeralam Office,

The lotus feet of Sri Sri Guru Deva are my refuge. Trivandrum, *23rd Nov. 1923.*

My dear Nirmal,

Received your affectionate post card here yesterday. Very glad to know that you are all doing well. I came here a few days ago. As I was gradually becoming weaker I have thought of staying here for sometime for treatment under Dr. Thampi's care. It will be as the Lord decides. From the day my ailment has been detected, I have restricted my diet to the best of my knowledge. Now my diet is being regulated under Dr. Thampi's directions. This is the modern method, i.e., half ration, fasting etc., along with some

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medicine. The sugar in the urine has been reduced to some extent. But the weakness is there as before. Doctor says that it will continue until blood sugar is perfectly normal. The disease is only arrested when the sugar is reduced in the urine. When the blood sugar will become normal there will be no longer any special ground for anxiety.

You have asked me to write an account of how I had the good fortune to meet Thakur with a view to incorporating it in the new life, but about that I cannot find out any incident worth mentioning which you can include in the new book. Besides, I do not remember the year, date, Thithi, etc. But for your information I am stating how our first meeting took place and also one or two incidents subsequent to it. One late afternoon, about 5-30 p.m., when chatting with some boys of our quarter (Bosepara) it was suddenly noised about that a Paramahamsa had come to the house of Balaram Babu. Many people of the neighbourhood were going to see him. After some time it occured to me, 'why not I go ? Let me see what kind of Paramahamsa he is '. Our home was quite close to Balaram Babu's. Two minutes' walk. I threw a chadder on my person and ran. Reaching the upstairs, I found that Balaram Babu's parlour and verandah were packed with visitors. There was hardly any room in the parlour. Peeping in I saw that in the centre of the room was placed a carpet on a small cushion and a stout pillow on it. But the Paramahamsa was not there. The seat was vacant. I was then 18 or 19 years old. As I was young and was not acquainted with any one, I did not dare to ask anybody as to where the Paramahamsa was. I therefore went to the western verandah and there leaning against the wall of the room, I waited. Some 5 or 7 minutes later, I saw a man coming with tottering steps ; like one dead drunk from the inside the house, along that very western verandah. He was not looking at anything, but was absorbed in himself. He came to where I stood, looked

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at me for half a minute or so and then slowly staggered on into the parlour. He did not exchange a single word with me and I stood nonplussed and forgot even to salute him. As he entered the room I felt a creeping sensation within my bosom as if my whole body, from head to foot, became paralysed. When this sensation abated a little, I ran back to my house where after some rest I recovered. This was my first meeting with Sri Ramakrishna. But I did not know at the time that he lived at Dakshineswar and his name was Sri Ramakrishna. After this meeting I did not make enquiries as to who he was, where he lived, etc. I think this incident took place a year or little less before the meeting of Sri Ramakrishna with Sri Girish Babu. I have never kept any diary of my life's incidents, and therefore I do not remember anything about date, month, year etc.

A few days after the above incident, one day after finishing midday meals I went to Hari Maharaj's house to see him. He was my friend from boyhood days, and his residence was close to ours. We used to meet each other often. On that day he said ' Let us go to Dakshineswer and see Paramahamsa Deva.' We (Hari Maharaj, Gangadhar, one or two more used to visit now and then Rani Rasmani's Kali Temple) went to Dakshineswar by boat from Bagh-Bazar Ghat. I thought he must be another Paramahamsa and he whom I saw at Balaram Babu's must be a different person, for I had never been to the Kali Temple before. Unfortunately Paramahamsa Deva was not there that day. He had gone to Calcutta. I missed him. We were looking on the different pictures of Gods and Goddesses hanging from the wall in his room. A photo of his also was hanging from the wall. Suddenly my eyes fell on it and I was startled. On asking Hari Maharaj, he said, "It is a photo of Paramahamsa Deva." I replied, " I have seen him " He asked, " Where ?" " At the house of Balaram Babu" I replied. "Then it is all right " he said.

Shortly after this one day I walked from my house

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to Dakshineswar alone. It was about half past eleven or twelve, when I reached the Kali Temple Without stopping anywhere I went direct to Paramahamsa Deva's room and found him taking his meal. I saluted him and sat on the floor before his seat. This was my first bowing down before him. I was so ignorant that it did not occur to me, that I must not salute him, while he was engaged in eating or sit by him. However he did not mind these breaches of etiquette. After finishing his meal he washed his hands and mouth, sat on cot with placid face and began to smoke and chew betal leaf as also to speak with me smiling. At that time there was no one else in the room. Only the holy mother waited on the northern verandah (Then it was screaned with bamboo tattis) to feed him and to attend on his other needs. After a few priliminary questions he suddenly said something curious which astonished me. He said: "The other day a boy resembling you came here and asked if I could act as his go-between!' I did not quite understand him and wondered why he used that slang expression. As I kept silent, he at once read my mind and said, "No, no, by the word go-between, I mean one who brings about the meeting of a person with his beloved Lord. He is the Guru, He is everything. There is no difference between him and God." I understood that it was a hint thrown out to me to accept him in that light. After a while he came down from the cot and placing his left hand on my shoulders as a mark of favour, stepped out of his room and slowly walked towards the Panchavati. With great tenderness he said "come here now and then." Then my heart was filled with joy. After reaching the Panchavati he saluted the spot where he had practised Sadhana, and sat on a lower step. Then in an exalted mood he began to speak with divine Mother. I did not understand a bit of that half articulated speech, I could catch the word "Mother" at intervals and knew that he was talking to his Mother. Shortly after, he returned to his room from Panchavati, when I bowed before him and returned home.

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After this incident I used to go to the Kali Temple now and then—sometimes with Hari Maharaj and sometimes alone. Besides, when he used to come to Balaram Babu's house I would go and meet him. When he was lying ill at Cossipore I used to go there also. On hearing one after noon the news of his Mahasamadhi on the previous night, I went to the Cossipore Garden. I bowed down to his form for the last time, and placed my head on his feet. Then I returned home from the cremation ground at about 10 p. m.

After his passing away I used to feel his want very deeply and used to pray to him in my heart. He was compassionate enough to grant my prayer and presented himself before me in another form fulfilling my heart's desire. This was no other than Swami Vivekananda. He is the be all and end all of my life. Sannyas, Renunciation, dispassion, spirituality and etc., whatever I received is all through his grace, his grace. I used to look upon Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji as one and do so still. When I used to visit Sri Ramakrishna I did not know Swamiji, I heard his name and saw him only a few times from a distance. How I had the goodfortune to find refuge in this embodiment of love and perfect incarnation of grace is a long story. I shall relate it on another occasion if I get the opportunity. It was he who dragged me out of my home and kindly gave shelter at the Baranagore Math. It had come into existence only a month or two ago. As I have a love for you I write these incidents for your personal information. Do not communicate these to anyone else or incorporate them in the new life of Sri Ramakrishna. Omitting these details you may mention in general on what occasion I had the good fortune to meet the Master.

If my health improves I shall pay a visit to Mayavati Ashrama and personally relate to you what I have heard about Swamiji from his own lips. Thus far for the present. Please accept my sincere love and

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Namaskaras and convey the same to others in the Ashrama.

Very affectionately yours,

NIRMALANANDA.

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* * *

My dear Mr. Raman Menon,

Yours of the 3rd instant duly to hand. Extremely sorry to learn the very sad news of Saradamani's passing away. May she rest in peace in the loving arms of our Holy Mother. We are mere tools in the hands of God. His Will be done. I pray to Sri Gurumaharaj to give you and your wife peace and consolation and also strength enough to stand the loss you have sustained. Do not be afraid. Our human life is beset with ups and downs, smiles and frowns and weal and woe. Better days will prevail again and everything will be readjusted before long by the grace of Sri Gurumaharaj. * * *

With my love and blessings to yourself your wife and children and to all our friends over there,

* * *

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* * *

My dear Sankaran,

The telegram containing the very sad news came to hand this noon. How grieved and shocked I am, I can hardly express to you in words. It is all the will of Sri Gurumaharaj. He knows what is best. So it is better for us to absolutely resign unto His will. May the spirit of the departed rest in absolute peace and bliss.

Accept my deepest sympathies and convey the same to the wife and children of the departed in their saddest bereavement.

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I came here last Wednesday and am doing fairly well. I hope to go to Malabar in the course of a month when I expect to see you. With my kindest sympathy, love and blessings.

* * *

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* * *

My dear Sankara Menon,

Yours of the 7th instant being forwarded to this place reached me here a couple of days ago. I am very glad to receive it and to learn that you are doing well.

Yes, I fully remember your noble desire that you communicated to me when I was over there last year. It is no wonder that people who are householders will hardly approve and appreciate what you propose to them. They will always try to throw obstacles on your way. You need not mind their opinion. Be resolute and firm. You can continue to your present occupation and in a few months settle and arrange all your concerns and affairs. Thereafter leave every responsibility of your position to persons concerned therein. Most probably I shall be coming over to Trivandrum in the early part of April next. I shall then personally discuss and talk over the matter as to what will be needful for your future carrier. In the meanwhile try to expedite your settlement of affairs and I wish you every success in your cherished desire.

I shall be touring over for a month or so in this side and I hope to return to Calcutta by the early part of February next.

Convey my love and blessings to all at the Vatiyurcaw Ashrama, Dr. Thampi and all other friends over there.

Hoping this will find you in health and spirits; With much love and kindest blessings,

* * *

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* * *

My dear Gopi,

Yours of the 15th duly to hand. The previous one which you wrote to me, I am very sorry to say that it did not reach me. It is needless to mention that had it been received by me, it would not have been left unanswered.

I am very very sorry to learn that you lost your dear old father about a month and a little over ago. Accept my deep and sincere sympathy in your bereavement and convey the same to the rest of your house. May the soul of the departed rest in peace and bliss.

Death comes unawares. It is the common lot of every one under the sun. None can escape this stern law of Maya. All will have to shuffle off this mortal coil. The inevitable can never be avoided. Such is the hard and fast law of karma under the reign of Maya. No use of crying over the spilt milk. Make the best use of your time while living. March on and do not look back. * * *

Hoping this will find you in strength and spirits.

* * *

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* * *

My dear Sreejut S. Brahmeswar,

I was away from Bangalore for the last 3 months and had been busy in inspecting the various centres of our Mission in Travancore Cochin and Malabar. I am now on my way back to Bangalore. I arrived here only three days back. I am very glad to receive your letter of the 14th instant, which was forwarded to me to this place. I am also very happy to know that you have come out successful in the Chambers' Examination of the High Court and that yourself and all the rest of your house are, by the grace of God, doing well. I am glad to learn that you are preparing for the M.L. Exmination of the Calcutta University and I wish you every success in your attempt.

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The quotation that you have cited in your letter from the works of Swami Vivekananda is only a rendering in English of the authoritative opinion on the Vedic texts by the Rishis of old. The late Sankaracharya and other commentators of our Vedic Texts have unanimously opined that those portions of the Vedas which deal with ritualism, ceremonialism, the modes of life of the then people of the Vedic period and which do not tally with the rationalistic theory of the Vedic truths are to be rejected. And, also later on, the puranic lores which are nothing but practical demonstrations of the theories of the Vedic truths in the form of Mythology are also to be rejected if they do not conform to Vedic truths. Swami Vivekananda did not mean by the word "reason" our ordinary common sense. 'Reason' is that which confirms and establishes the truths visualised by the Rishis by their introspection and intuitive knowledge. In interpreting the Vedic texts free-thinking was allowed in so far as it established the truths and eternal principles found in the Vedas. It had no further scope. Intuition is never contradicted by reason, but where reason cannot proceed intuition can. It is for this reason 'free-thinking' had a limited scope.

It is a vast subject and at present I am very busy. In the space of a short letter it is not possible for me to do full justice to your question. I mean going over to Patna next summer and when I meet you I shall try to throw some light on your doubts. I am quite well and I hope you too are all well. Convey my affectionate blessings to your father and the rest of your family and accept the same yourself. Hoping this will find you in health and joy.

* * *

* * *

My dear and Beloved Shambhu,

Your very affectionate letter written on the Vijaya Dasami Day, the memorable day when you took refuge

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in the hallowed feet of Sri Ramakrishna duly to hand. May His Choicest blessings be ever showered on you and may he ever keep you immersed in His Divine effulgence radiating bliss and peace. He was the consummation of all the past Avataras and a living demonstration of spirituality itself. He came to fulfil and to establish peace and harmony in the domain of various religions by demonstrating practically their underlying unity. And age-long disputes, dissensions and discord He came to bring to an end. That was the mission of His life. Once more the spiritual history was repeated.

Since the receipt of your letter I was very busy and I am so sorry for this tardy reply. I hope you will not mind it.

What you have stated with regard to your present mental attitude is perfectly right and it is also wholly in accordance with our scriptural injunction. It is the actual experience of all the Hindu Sages. I am also very glad to read the abstract from your prayer. Sri Guru Maharaj used to teach us how we were to pray. He said that in all our prayers our lips must correspond to our hearts. That must be the guiding principle of every prayer, no matter whether it is Sakama or Nishkama. Hence your form of prayer is absolutely correct.

A Jnani wants complete unification with God, but a Bhakta wants to be ever in communion with Him and to live, move and have his being in Him. Bhakta says "I do not want to be converted into *sugar* (Brahman) but I want to enjoy *sugar*." "Both are correct. The difference is purely temperamental". So Sri Ramakrishna said. "None else but he whose present birth is the last shall come unto *me*" is the solemn and mighty message of His graciousness left to us by Sri Gurumaharaj. You are one of His accepted children and you have on that head no cause of fear whatsoever for a re-birth. Your life is insured. Jai Sri Gurumaharaj ki jai. You are saved and He has vouchsafed that guarantee.

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Things are going on here in the self same way. I am keeping fairly well.

Hope this will find you in spirit and cheer.

With ever so much love for you and yours.

* * *

Mother, Snehalata Devi,

I have duly received your letter. As I was rather busy I could not reply earlier. I am sorry to learn that you are not well with your body. Why did you not write in detail about the nature of your illness. I pray to the Lord that He may cure you and restore you soon to health. Make me happy and devoid of any anxiety by replying as to how you are now. No mother, there is no harm in praying that your son-in-law may have faith and devotion in the Lord. On the other hand it would only do good. Some say that there is no God and that everything has come out of nature. They are totally mistaken. It is quite natural that the devotee feels hurt when he hears their talk. But, we should not be angry towards them and we should not look on them with scorn. We should pray to the Lord for their good, as well as for the illumination of their mind. There is no harm if a woman does not marry. Why should one who has no desire and who does not wish at all to enjoy worldly happiness marry ? Her mind and heart—all have been given to the Lord and she feels the highest bliss and peace in Him. If she is compelled to marry, she will have to endure a life of intense restlessness and misery. But, it would not be good for those who have even a little worldly desire. It would be very bad for them to remain unmarried. If they remain as house holders for some time their worldly desires will decrease and die away. What is it that Jaya says ? Give her

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my love and blessings. Ask her to write to me in a letter about her dream and the mantra. I shall be here for about a week and then I shall go to Calcutta. I hope that I may be there by the 20th February. I am rather well. I pray that the Lord may keep you all in peace and happiness. Don't be agitated, mother. I bless you intensely. May you have intense devotion, faith and love. May the Lord bless you and grant you His vision so that you may have the highest peace and bliss.

* * *

Srimathi Annapurna Devi,

My heart's love and blessings to you. I am still here on account of work. I have not yet gone to Calcutta. After the birthday festival of Sri Ramakrishna, I shall be going to Calcutta. Don't be worried if I delay in writing letters. I am alone and have to write to many people and besides I have so much work that I find no leisure. Can I ever be angry with you ? You are my beloved daughter. Your relationship with me is for ever. Don't be worried if I delay in writing letters. Why should you fear ? By the grace of the Lord you will have intense devotion, faith and love, and He will give you supreme peace. And you will remain immersed in the madness of divine love. Believe in Him, and depend on Him and wait in patience. He will make everything straight in time. I hear that your third daughter is very ill. Don't be agitated. I am very sorry at it. I hope that she would be quite well now by the Lord's grace and that she would be as healthy as ever. Observe the birthday celebration of the Lord in the following manner. On the second day of the bright fortnight after Shivaratri worship Him in a special manner with Payasa, sweetmeats and other offerings. After that meditate, do japam etc. In the end, let all the members of the house take Prasad together. It will be enough if you

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do like this. My heart's love and blessings to you and to all the members of your house. Your well-wisher father.

* * *

Srimathi Annapurna Devi,

I have received your letter as soon as I reached this place. I am very happy to know that you are all well in body and mind by the grace of the Lord. I pray at His Lotus feet that you may have all sided, good and unshakable firm faith and devotion to Him by His grace.

Both Sri Ramakrishna and your Ishtadeva are one and the same. There is a difference only in form. If you meditate on one, it is the same as meditating on both. If you realize one, you realize both. If you can meditate on Sri Ramakrishna, it is the same as meditating on your Ishta Murthi. Because, Ishta Murthi is shining in Him. Hence it is sufficient if you meditate on Sri Ramakrishna. Continue the Japa in the same manner as you are doing now. I am very happy to know that your third daughter has got the Mantra in dream. Ask her to do Japa with that Mantra. She should not reveal the Mantra to others. Convey to her my love and blessings. That which you have heard at night while in the waking consciousness are the words of the Lord. In time He will grant you His vision. Have no doubt about it. Pray always at His Lotus feet that he may fill your heart with love and devotion. Don't pray for anything else. If you get devotion and faith you will be granted His vision. He will grant Himself to you in due time. My love and blessings to you.

* * *

Srimathi Annapurna Devi,

I have received your letter and I am glad to know that you are all well.——'s Upanayana ceremony will be celebrated probably by the grace of the Lord. Don't be sorry that I may not be able to be present at

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that time. Have the Puja, Dhyana etc.. of your Ishtadevata and that alone will do; there is no need of any other Puja etc. If the root of a tree is watered the other parts will be strong and living. There is no need of watering the other parts. Don't be agitated by what other people say. Practise what I have told you. Don't have any Puja, Archana etc., with some desire in the heart. All works should be done wihout any desire. Dedicate the fruits of the work at the Lotus feet of the Lord. That will do good to you all. I will be in your place during the month of March. I sha ll be here till the Saraswati puja. My health is not good even now. My leisure is also very little. So, I cannot write to you all separately. My love and blessings to you all.

* * *

Mother Annapurna,

I embarked from Madras on the 14th December. I shall reach Rangoon on next Monday. I got your letter while I was at Madras. I am very busy and so it is difficult to write separately to everyone. Convey my love and blessings to Sneha and Jaya when you write to them. Tell them that they need not be worried in not getting letters. They can know everything about me from you. That would be sufficient. Write to me to the address I shall give. I may be in Rangoon for twenty or twentyfive days. From there I go to Dacca and Dinajpur. From Dinajpur through Chappra, Kasi and Lucknow, I go to Bombay. I may be able to reach Chappra in the beginning of next month. You have created in vain some confusion in your mind. It is said in the Shastras that he who is in the heart of guru is the same as your Ishtadeva. Neither is higher or lower. Why should you have any confusion regarding this and that in vain. To worship the Ishta or to worship Him who is in the heart of the guru is one and the same. There is not the slightest difference. Do you understand now? Don't be confused anymore. I am well, My love and blessings to you all.

* * *

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Srimathi Annapurnadevi,

What you have seen in your dream is no illusion. It is said in the Chandi that the Mother Jagadamba is manifest in the world in all female forms. Every woman is a part of, and her manifestation. Our Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna saw this manifestation and part of the Mother in every woman. Perhaps, you might have read this in His Life. In the Puranas also it is said that Sri Krishna has become Kali and Sri Radha is offering Pushpanjali with flowers and sandal paste at His lotus feet. Don't be frightened at seeing such dreams. He shows you that He is in all and that He Himself has taken the forms of all gods and godesses. * * *

Mother Annapurna and Umarani,

I am very glad to know from your letter that you are all well by the grace of the Lord. * * *

Well, if you have no desire to go on pilgrimage, you need not do so. No need of doing anything by compulsion. Staying at home and dedicating ones heart and mind at the lotus feet of the Ishta Devata is the highest state. Ramaprasad sings "What use (of my going on pilgrimage). At the feet of Mother Kali many Tirthas lie." It is those whose minds are superficial that make much of Tirthas and say you will get rest by going to this place or that place. They are seekers of rest and leisure and are anxious always about it. Why not you become intoxicated in devotion, faith and love melting your very mind and heart in the Lord? But all are not equal. As one thinks so one gets. You seek the Lord, you will get the Lord; but you will not at all get leisure to idle yourself. My love and blessings to you all. * * *

My dear Mr. Chennaya,

Your very kind and affectionate letter of 23rd duly to hand. Many many thanks for the same. I am

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very sorry to know that you are still troubled with exema and it is causing you so much pain. May Sri Gurumaharaj make you rid of it pretty soon.

It is nearly a fortnight since I came over here. I had to come over here via Bombay as a portion of the east coast line was washed off by the recent floods. However, I was able to reach Calcutta in time to see our much revered and beloved Swami Saradanandaji at least for a few hours. He was almost unconscious outwardly and was unable to speak as the tongue was perfectly paralysed. He passed away very calmly and quietly with a blissful smile on his face, the same day, at midnight. One of the biggest gems of our Mission, we lost in him. There is not at the present day any one who may be thought fit to occupy his position. It is an irrecoverable loss. His place will remain ever unfilled. Sri Gurumaharaj only knows how the activities of our Mission, hence forward, will be properly guided and conducted. May He bless it with adequate power and vitality to fulfil the mission of its life.

There will be some important changes in the administration of our Mission and in connection with that, meetings of the Board of Trustees—election of the General Secretary and sundry other things—will take place. I have been asked to be present in all these items of work. Hence I shall have to stay here for some time. Besides, there are calls and invitations, which I have already promised to accept, from far and near places. I believe I will very probably be able to return to Bangalore just a few days before the Birthday Anniversary of Sri Swami Vivekananda.

* * *

My dear Kunhiraman,

Very glad to receive your letter and to know that you are doing well and that the flooring of the Ashrama will be complete in another fortnight.

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Sri Mahapurushji came over here on the 22nd ultimo. He will stay here perhaps for a couple of weeks more and thereafter he will leave for Madras. I am very busy now on account of his stay here. I shall have to stay here so long as he remains here. I will also have to go to Madras with him when he leaves this. I will return to Bangalore again after a week's stay in the Madras Mutt. After my return to Bangalore I shall write to you and fix definitely the date of opening. In the meanwhile try to hasten the completion of the Ashrama Building. The programme of the ceremony on the day of opening will be as follows :—

Morning 8 to 10 a.m.,—Procession with Bhajana and distribution of Prasad.

Noon—12 to 2 p.m.—Feeding hungry Narayanas.

Evening : Lectures.—Either on the same day or the following according as convenient.

Consult V. K. and Pathiyar if anything else in the items of the programme be needed for addition. To defray the expenses of the day, you will have to collect materials (rice etc. for feeding) and a little money by subscription. * * *

Convey my affectionate blessings to V.K. Pathiyar, and all other friends.

With my affectionate blessings for you and all, both in your and your wife's houses. * * *

Extracts from a letter to Sm. Amiya Dutta.

* * *

Whenever you get an opportunity, go on with mental Japam of the Mantra, in whatever condition you may be, changing your clothes or nob, having bathed or not, in the morning or midday or evening. While eating, resting on your bed, bathing, walking,

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nay, at all times keep continuous remembrance of the Lord. There is no restriction for you regarding the time, cleanliness, etc. Do this at all times and in all conditions. The Lord Himself has taken all your responsibilities. You need not at all be anxious. I assure you that He protects you always. Have no fear. Be free from any worry or anxiety.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, "meditate in a corner, in the forest or in the mind." To meditate and go on with the Japam mentally is the best. Ramaprasad has sung "mind, you should see and I should see and no one else." So, it is enough to remember, think, meditate and go on with the Japam etc. mentally. You may bathe or not, change your clothes or not. Whatever may be your condition or wherever you may be, you need not mind. Don't worry about the proper time or ablution etc. With devotion and faith, call on the Lord. This is the essential thing. For pursuing Japam etc. with Bhakti there is no need of following any particular rules. Call upon Him with the simplicity of heart of a child knowing the Lord to be your very own and repeat His name. That would be enough. You need not do anything else. Whenever you get an opportunity, do what you think to be good, choosing a place where there will be no trouble or confusion. Have no fear; He is looking after you at all times and protecting you from all troubles and dangers, seated in your heart as the Antaryamin. When you have taken refuge in Him, what fear have you? What anxiety? Depend on Him, believe in Him and be at ease. None can do any injury to you here or hereafter. Wherever you may be and in whatever condition, I assure you that He is leading you to perfect good.

* * *

Extracts from a letter to Sm. Amiya Dutta.

* * *

Father and Mother are the first Gurus in this world. Serving them will do you good.

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Always lead a pure life. Bhagavan is Antaryamin. He is everywhere. He is in your own heart. Pray to Him always. * * *

Having faith in Him, go on with your duties. By His Grace, everything will be all right * * *

Extracts from a letter to Sm. Amiya Dutta.

* * *

In a new environment, the mind will not be able to attend to its work properly for some time in the beginning. But after a time, everything will be all right. * * *

"I have to live with all sorts of people here ? How can I improve myself ?" You ask. The improvement or degradation of a person depends on his own mind and character. Externally, live with them as if you are one of them. But know in your heart of hearts that you are completely different in your thought and outlook and remain in your own Bhava. The character, conduct, godliness etc. of a person are not external things. All these are internal. If you be in your own Bhava mentally, you will improve. Sri Ramakrishna used to say "meditate in the corner, forest or mind." You need not have any anxiety. The Lord is looking after you, protecting you. Cast all your burden on Him and always, while eating, resting, walking, etc. think of Him, remember Him constantly. Pray to Him wholeheartedly. Then you will get great strength, happiness and peace. It would be sufficient if you do this. Nothing else is necessary. * * *

Extracts from a letter to Sm. Amiya Dutta.

* * *

You have written that, though you have been there for six months, you do not feel at ease. How can it be helped ? Do your work at the prescribed times. But be in your own Bhava at all times. In the field of work, there are people of various tendencies, natures and characteristics. Can all be good-natured ? This variety is the plan of God's

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creation. Even the children of the same parents are not similar. Then what to speak of others who are bound to be of quite different natures and tendencies. Do not lose your peace of mind (equanimity) on account of that. So try your best to remain in your own Bhava always—and mix with all whenever necessary. Whenever you get leisure, pray to God with all your heart and soul and say mentally: "O Lord, give me strength of mind, peace and bliss. Let no impure thought ever find a place in my mind even in dreams. May my devotion to you remain steadfast and firm. Be ever seated in the lotus (throne) of my heart. May my feeling of your Divine Presence be constant." Pray with a yearning heart in this manner. He, the Lord, will remove all your doubts and worries and keep you steady, firm and in the highest bliss. If you call upon Him sincerely, with all your heart and soul, He will fulfil all your good and pure desires. Why should you fear? His mercy is infinite. * * *

Extracts from a letter to Sm. Amiya Dutta.

* * *

I am anxious and sorry to learn that your health is getting worse day by day. Find out the cause of your ill-health and take particular care to keep your body healthy and strong. Don't neglect the body. If you are not healthy, you will not be able to do any work and your mind will not be inclined to work. So be very careful and try to regain your health soon.

I am glad to know that the new teacher who has joined your school recently is a very good girl. That school in which the majority of teachers are of good character will prosper in all directions. As regards those who think that the so-called literacy is the highest goal of man, it seems to me that there is no great harm in not having that kind of education. The object of literacy (learning) is to get manliness. If you get manliness, all the divine Bhavas and qualities will in time manifest in you. Then the purpose of

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human life is accomplished. That learning which helps to increase the so-called civilisation, luxury and sense-gratification will not only be of no benefit to our country, but will also produce much evil. The education, culture, ways and manners of India, should be in the Indian way. Then alone will it bring out good results. This marks out India from other nations. Imitation of the west will pave the way for the destruction of Indian life. If our special feature as a nation is to be preserved, this sort of blind imitation is not at all good for our nation.

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* * *

My dear Sukhananda,

Very glad to receive your letter and to learn that the Shiva temple construction has been completed. I am very sorry that I am unable to go over there to perform the ceremony of consecration. You can do it on the Shivarathri day in the manner stated as under. At 9 p.m., make Puja and Mangalarathi with Naivedyam of fruits and sweet things only. On the following morning, make the same Puja and Mangalarathi with Karpuram etc., and offer all kinds of cooked Naivedyam such as rice, Sambar, Payasams of different variety etc. together with fruits and sweets. Invite and feed the devotees and a few poor Narayanas as you can afford to do. Thereafter, daily Puja and offering in an ordinary way just as is done for Gurumaharaj may be performed. Very glad to know that Mr. Krishnan Nair's building construction is fast approaching completion and that he has borne most of the expenses for the temple. May Lord Shiva bless him ever so much for that. Convey my love and blessings to him and also to all other devotees both men and women. All are doing well here. Hope this finds you in health and spirits. With love and blessings. x x x

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x x x

Dear Subramanian Nambudiripad,

Sri Swami Nirmalanandaji has received your letter dated 1—6—'34 in due time. At present he is very busy here and hence he could not reply you himself. He has asked me to request you not to worry yourself in this manner and to go on with your practice with intense faith so that you will surely reach the goal in this life alone. Not a bit of thought that is thought even while sitting in the innermost corner of a cave will be in vain. The omnipresent and omniscient Lord understands your practices and He will give you progress and lead you to the goal. Faith and strength of mind—these are the two things wanted. Weak-minded men can achieve very little in this world. So Sri Swamiji has asked me to request you to be strong—shaking off all mental weakness and to go on practise Japam and meditation regularly. He also told me to inform you that you will have every success in course of your practice.

Believe that you are doing the right thing and pray to your Ideal to guide you whenever you feel any difficulty. Everything will be all right. Try to increase your mental strength so that you will be able to avoid mental depression. Of course dissatisfaction helps growth, but disappointment causes degradation. You are progressing and you will progress till you reach the goal if you constantly practise. So do not worry, go on practise, Sri Bhagavan and Swamiji will lead you properly.

Sri Swamiji has asked me to inform you that he is sending his kind blessings to you. I am writing this letter as directed by him. He and all others here are doing well. With the prayers for your happiness and peace.

Yours sincerely,

SWAMI VISHADANANDA.

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P. S.—One thing more, that is about your japam. Try to practise mental repetition. Constant practise will make you able to conduct it properly. When you feel difficulty you may repeat with your lips at that time only. But try to repeat mentally always. x x x

My dear Gopi,

Your letter of 2nd instant duly to hand. Glad to know that the Sevashrama is now removed to a better building and is working well. Very sorry to learn that your brother-in-law passed away on the 2nd of April. May his soul rest in eternal peace. It is quite human that at times one feels disinclined to work or to interest oneself to one's daily routine of life. It will go away again after a time and one's normality is bound to return in due course. So, do not be nervous about it. Running of life is rarely smooth. Its path is ever beset with diverse kind of rubs and up and downs. It is a hard and fast law of Maya. None can escape its regour, whether the rich or the poor and the powerful or the weak. All uniformly groan under its cruel pressure. It is an unalterable rigid law. So, do not get awed to face the naked truth. Fight on boldly, unminding success or failure and then alone you can expect to reach your goal.

Convey my love and blessings to all at the Ashrama and also to K. Menon and other friends over there. x x x

Dear C,— x x x

Your letter of the 4th instant has reached me duly. I am very glad to know that you are all well as also the Bhaktas there * * * If the element of autocracy gradually centres an organization, know that it is clearly going the way of degradation and down fall. The principle of any society or organization should be "Let all join hands and work; whether we win or fail is of no consequence. Where this principle is wanting degradation is the necessary consequence. I need not say further on this matter. * * *

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SWAMI NIRMALANANDA

HIS LIFE AND TEAGHINGS

PART V

(Extraordinary experiences of Certain Devotees.)

MR. CHENGAPPA (COORG) WRITES :—

Parvati (Mr. C.'s cousin) had temporarily to suspend her studies and was living with her mother. In March 1930 or so she had a dream-like vision in which she saw a bearded Sadhu sitting in an easy chair by the side of the bed she was sleeping on. He told her 'your days are numbered. On Friday, the 21st of April you should follow me at 12 noon". I was told of it when I visited them next time. As the day and the date were found to agree, we were somewhat alarmed. But as days passed it was forgotten. On that particular day, Parvati took her bath and went home. It was a day of fast and she had to prepare special offerings after doing her devotional practices. When the mother went to the shrine, Parvati was not there. She went to the kitchen where also she was not found. The mother got alarmed and hastened to the bed room. There, she found her daughter lying on her bed—her eyes closed, body perspiring and cold. It was then that she remembered the Sanyasin's word. She ran into the shrine weeping and prayed for the safety of her only child—the pupil of her eye. Gurudeva who is no ohter than Bhagavan—Para Brahman—heard her prayers. The daughter saw a light and within it the form of Sri Swamiji passing his hands over her from top to toe. Immediately she opened her

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eyes as if waking from sleep. On being asked by the mother she related the experience.

Not long after, about the end of May, on the new moon day at noon, I got fever. It developed into pneumonia. I was taken to the Hospital for treatment. That was on Sunday, the 6th day after I got fever. The astrologers and the doctors were all doubtful of my recovery. On Monday, therefore, Mr. G. Subbayya who had come to see me was got to send a wire to Sri Swamiji who was then at Trivandrum, to ask for his blessings. His reply telegram was despatched on Tuesday evening and received at the Hospital on Wednesday morning. "Don't fear. Ramakrishna's blessings on you" were his words. Fever left me that Tuesday evening. I was able to hear the wire read out by the then Deputy Superintendent of Police who had come to see me. After a month we went to Bangalore to pay our respects to Swamiji. On seeing us Sri Swamiji said: "You did well in sending the wire".

The last time we had the privilege of seeing him, living near him and receiving his blessings, was in 1938. We went there early in February and returned on the 15th of April (the day following the Vishu Sankrama). He was very glad that we went there for a long stay. He had long wished us to visit the Trivandrum Ashrama. After a couple of weeks' stay at Ottapalam we wanted to go to Trivandrum. He said there was no hurry and put it off from day to day. Finally he made arrangements for our journey and stay there. He wrote to the Ashramites to lodge us there and to take us to the temple and to the other important places. He wrote also to Rao Bahadur Dr. Tambi and Mr. Parameswaran Pillai who was District Munsiff at Adoor. His object was, it struck us afterwards, to make his disciples and devotees known to each other and to create a fraternity among them. We went via Adoor, Mr. Parameswaran Pillai's place. Reaching Trivandrum we became acquainted with

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Dr. Tambi, Mrs. Tambi, their son Dr. Kesavan Nair, daughter Mrs. Thankam Krishnan Tambi, Mr. C. K. Krishna Pillai, Mr. M. R. Narayana Pillai and a host of his disciples and devotees. After our return from Trivandrum we were at his feet for about a month x x On the 12th of April I asked for permission to go back. Whenever I asked for permission, he used to say "stay on for some days more—there is no hurry." But this time, he did not only raise no objection, but straightaway said : " Yes, you may go back any day, even to-morrow. There is nothing grand or spectacular in the Vishu festival on the 14th. And there is no objection to your leaving the Ashrama to-morrow—a Friday—as it is not your house." It struck us as very very unusual and strange for him to say so. He added that whenever I fell ill I should go there (Ottapalam) and I should think "My guru is great". He asked Parvati to write to him as soon as we reached home. All these seemed mysterious, but we did not know, we had not the capacity to understand, what it meant, although we thought and talked about it among ourselves. We received his blessings early morning on the 13th and departed. By the time we reached Cannanore (by noon that day) boils appeared on my head and neck and even on the fingers of my right hand. They multiplied and spread all over the body. When Mercara was reached I became unable to do anything, not to speak of sitting up or writing. Therefore Parvati herself had to write to him. A week passed. In the 2nd week after we took his blessings and left the Ashrama, we got by wire the shocking tidings of his Mahasamadhi. It was only then that we could make out the significance of his last words.

Another devotee Mr. Madhuram Pillay (now Swami Ambananda, stated as follows :—

I have a large number of brothers, sisters and relations all of whom have become Swamiji's devotees and disciples. He used to visit our house at Mavelikara very often. My brother Damodaram, had

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no issue for 9 years after his marriage. Once the couple and myself accompanied Swamiji to Kanyakumari. For our sake Swamiji prayed to the Mother to bless the couple with issue. Soon after, my sister-in-law became pregnant. One day I told my brother, in Swamiji's hearing, that the first child should be dedicated to Bhagavan to become a Sanyasin. Swamiji said: "No, no, that can't be. The first-born will be a girl. As you are going to get her as a blessing from the Mother, name her Kumari". The child was a girl and was named Kumari.

I had the experience of the picture of Sri Gurumaharaj appearing as that of the Holy Mother and Vice-versa. I was at a loss to know what it meant and was thinking within myself whether I might ask the Swami about it. Soon after, in the course of his conversation, Swamiji said Sri Gurumaharaj has told us that 100 per cent of himself is Mother and that there is no difference between Him and the Mother.

Mr. K. Raman Menon (uncle of Swami Amalananda.) Mr. M. S. Reddiar and others had similar experiences of having their wishes fulfilled through Swamiji's grace.

Mr. Sankaraveli Parameswaran Pillai, B.A., B.L., District Munsiff, states as follows :—

During the early days of this disciple's acquaintance with Swamiji he used to attend Swamiji's meditation classes at Haripad held at 4 A.M., daily. His mother-in-law used to dissuade him from taking religion so seriously while he was so young. Swamiji had not met her. But he used to ask this disciple and other devotees to tell the lady to give him something. Several years later the lady had occasion to see Swamiji. He then asked her in person to give him something. She replied; "I have nothing now, except my heart." Years passed, she became the head and manager of her family and she gave some lands to

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the Ashrama at Haripad and some lands and a building to the Kayamkulam Ashrama. She dedicated herself to Bhagavan and is now a Sanyasini under the name Nirmalayogini. The whole family was greatly loved and blessed by Swamiji.

The disciple was a clerk in the Huzur Office when he passed his B. L. Examination. He was to choose between remaining in Government service and entering a new and precarious world. He himself preferred to remain in safety where he was. Swamiji advised him to join the Bar. He began practice in the District Court at Kottayam. Swamiji next advised him to apply for a Munsiff's place. Munsiffs were recruited from the Bar of the High Court at Trivandrum, and not from any District Court, till that time. So the disciple proposed to go to Trivandrum and set up practice in the High Court. Swamiji asked him to remain where he was. All hopes were abandoned and he remained at Kottayam. Soon after, to the surprise of all, he was appointed Munsiff and a new precedent was created.

The disciple had applied to the Maharaja for permission for an interview. The rule is that when such an application is made, the applicant should not leave the station before the receipt of a reply. But soon after he had applied, Swamiji was proceeding to Kanyakumari to stay there for three days. The disciple forgetting all about his application accompanied the Swamiji, making provision for a three days' stay. On the 2nd day Swamiji said: "Let us go back to-day." The disciple feared that he might have displeased Swamiji and that was why Swamiji was preparing to depart so soon without staying there for three days as usual. But he spoke nothing and came back with Swamiji. Reaching home, he found the Royal permission awaiting him. The time of interview was fixed at 4-30 p.m., that very day. Had he not returned just then, his official position would have been in jeopardy.

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While in office as Munsiff, he applied for a transfer. He was told by the authorities that he could never be transferred to Kayamkulam which was his wife's native place. Transfer to places where the officer had local interests was never permitted. Swamiji, however, assured him that he would be transferred to the very place. He was transferred and he was of great help in establishing the Ashrama at Kayamkulam.

It was almost a rule with Swamiji that his devotees and disciples going to him and staying as his guests in the Ashramas should not go elsewhere without taking his permission. The disciple went to see the Swamiji in the Ashrama at Trivandrum. He had desired to return the same day. But as Swamiji wished, he found it providentially made convenient and possible for him to go to the town and return to the Ashrama in the evening. He took leave of Swamiji the same night as he wanted to leave the Ashrama long before day break. As he prepared to start, to his intense joy and surprise he saw Swamiji standing before him at that early hour. He prostrated and took the dust of his feet. Then Swamiji said "Hereafter you need not take my permission to go to the town. You may come to the Ashrama and go to the town as you please."

Alas! The disciple did not know and could not guess that, very soon, Swamiji was leaving the Ashrama, and the world too, for ever.

Sreejut. Bibhuti Ranjan Ghosh, his eldest son and Sjt. Nandipati Mukherjee were accompanying Swamiji to Chapra and crossing the Ganges in a steamer. All on a sudden a furious storm burst out. When the steamer reached the middle of the Ganges, the storm grew so violent that the condition of the steamer itself became precarious. Sjt. Ghosh and party were mortally afraid. Swamiji asked them to sit close by his side. Somehow, their fear utterly vanished and the steamer also was safe.

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Miss Indiraghosh, daughter of Bibhuti Ranjan Gosh, writes : "When my father and mother were initiated by Swamiji, we, their children, were very young. I was 5 years, my elder brother 7 and my younger sister 2½ years of age. When he stayed with us in our house at Chapra, we always kept company with him. He mixed with us very freely. He played with us, taught us many different kinds of play and new methods of playing. He combed our hair with his own hands, told us many stories and never rebuked us.

When he initiated us three, we were mere children with no idea of good and bad. But he knew our present and future and we had great faith in him. Though he has left the world, he has not left us in the dark. I feel his invisible presence protecting us at every step, helping us out of difficulties and blessing us every moment.

My mother felt his uncommon power twice in her life. One day—it must have been the day of Maharaj's departure from this world—she dreamt that she with other disciples was passing a night without sleep, decorating him in a hall. Worship, prayer, song and religious talk were going on. My mother asked them why they were keeping awake. They answered it was Haribasar day and so they were keeping vigil with him. Mother mentioned it to us, but we could not make out what it meant. We did not know what Haribasar was. Afterwards we received the heart-rending news. Even then we did not know if there was any connection between Haribasar and the passing away of Maharaj. After a long time, we came to know that he entered Mahasamadhi on Haribasar day and that Haribasar is Ekadasi day.

Some days afterwards, my mother was dosing, but not in sound sleep. She felt the touch of a soft hand. She felt afraid and asked my younger sister to keep her company in her bed. At that moment an invisible

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voice whispered "Don't fear. It is I. You are in great danger now. You should worship Sankat-Mochan at Benares." At that time my brother and sister were seriously ill. She followed his advice and all got well. Sankat-Mochan, she found, was Mahavirji.

My sister saw Him thrice before Her death. In the month of Jaishta in the year 1941, she was very ill and weak and was lying on her bed. She saw Maharaj came and touch her and pass his soft hands all over her body. From that day till the month of Jaishta in the following year she was in good health. After that she began to lose her health from day to day and became bed-ridden. In September she saw him with a mournful face standing beside her with tearful eyes. After two days, she dreamt that she had gone to Maharaj. Her body was very light and she went to him walking. She found two halls, one full of women and the other of men. Maharaj was speaking with some one. She waited for him in the verandah. He came to her. She touched his feet and said 'O Maharaj, I was very young when you initiated me. If anything was left over, kindly give it to me now.' "I will give you everything" he said. Some three or four days after that she was singing songs in praise of God. She asked us to change her dress, to cloth her in pure white, to keep the room pure and holy, and not to allow shoes or such other impure articles to be brought there. We all sat around her. She said Maharaj and Ramakrishna had come. She kept silent. Her soul passed away quietly.

Rai Sahib Bheeman Behari Basu, M.A., Under Secretary, Board of Revenue, Bihar, writes as follows:—

My acquaintance with Swami Nirmalanandaji alias Tulsi Maharaj dates back to the last quarter of the year 1928 when I toured South India, with my cousin, Babu Nirad Bihari Basu, to visit places of interest and historical importance. Armed with a letter of introduction from Swami Abyaktananda of

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Patna Ramakrishna Ashrama, we reached the Central Station, Bangalore on an October evening just before the inauguration of the resplendent Dasarah festivities in Mysore, and we were agreeably surprised to find that Tulsi Maharaj, as he was familiarly known to his admirers and disciples, had sent one Brahmachari and two students from the hostel attached to the Math at Bangalore City to meet us at the Station and to conduct us to the Math, as if we were his near relations. I mention this to illustrate his fine sense of hospitality and warm nature which made an abiding Impression on our minds during our short stay with him at the Math. He would see to our comforts even to the minutest detail in spite of the high position he occupied as an "Elder Swami" of the Holy Order of Sri Ramakrishna and the many calls on his valuable time as the chief organiser of the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission in the southern parts of the Madras Presidency, particularly in Malabar region, and in Mysore and Travancore. As a personal friend and coadjutor of Swami Vivekananda, he had derived his inspiration from the Great Master and, therefore, easily evoked our respect and admiration, but it was the human side of his nature which drew us very close to him. Dowered by nature with a handsome appearance and gifted with a resonant voice, he had a towering personality, both intellectually and spiritually, and profound learning which made us look like pigmies in his presence. He could talk for hours on a variety of subjects and such was the brilliance of his conversation that our interest never flagged—in fact he held us spell-bound all the time; no matter what the subject was. His reminiscences were most interesting and he never gave us the impression of a highbrow while speaking on religious or specialized topics. Highly cultured as he was, he had a child-like simplicity and affability which endeared him to all those with whom he came into contact. He had almost a maternal instinct in probing into the needs of his guests and disciples and took great delight in entertaining them with all sorts of delicacies.

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His hobby was gardening and he was also very much interested in laying out orchards. He "nursed" the young plants with motherly care and successfully introduced new varieties of fruit-trees from other parts of India in the spacious grounds of the Math at Bangalore. Although he was supremely devoted to the cause of the Mission, his catholicity knew no bounds and there was no trace of sectarianism or provincialism in him. He had thousands of devotees beyond the confines of Bengal where he was born and brought up and in spite of the handicap of language he was held in deep veneration and sincere affection by the people of Tamil Nadu, Mysore, Travancore and Malabar who speak different languages, but who opened their purse-strings at his call and helped him to establish a large number of Maths for the moral and spiritual benefit of his countrymen. He was essentially a man of action, what we call "Karmavir" and no difficulty or obstacle could deflect him from a course he had planned to pursue. A prince among men, he was a fine gentleman in the true sense of the term, strong and yet gentle, and his personal magnetism and persuasive eloquence no doubt contributed in a great measure to the marvellous success he had achieved in popularising the ideas of his Master in South India. His travels all over the world had given him a wide outlook and kindled a flame which gave scintillating light to the last day of his life. Subsequent to our meeting at Bangalore, I met him half a dozen times and my admiration and respect for him grew more intense each time—such was his magnetic influence. Although not an initiated disciple, I consider it to be my duty to pay my humble quota of tribute to one who has moulded my life for all that it is worth. May his soul rest in peace!

Sj. Kumuda Bandhu Sen, a devotee of Swami Vivekananda and a well-known writer in Bengali, states as follows :—

"In the year 1894 or 1895, I met Swami Nirmalanandaji at Alambazar Math as one of the Sanyasins who used to live there. At that time he was not fully shaven;

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there were moustaches and short beards. I saw him reading books, talking with us about religion, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and some times helping others in the performance of Math duties. He loved us all and we used to pay him respect as one of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. Though nothing extraordinary at that time, he seemed to be very intelligent and smart. When Swami Vivekananda came back to India—to Bengal—Swami Nirmalananda used to stay with him to listen to his talks and to attend on Bhaktas and guests. Swamiji loved him much and behaved towards him like other brothers. Most probably in 1903 he left for America and came back in 1906. I saw him in 1909 February in the Math and also at Holy Mother's place. In April 1909 he read a paper on Hinduism written by Swami Saradananda at a meeting of the Convention of Religions in India, held at the Town Hall, Calcutta. His reading was much appreciated. We used to go to the Belur Math, to the Vivekananda Society and also to the other Bhaktas places where he was specially invited, to hear him. Many people asked him many questions on the Hindu Philosophy and also on current religious matters and he replied to them all in a most clear and lucid style, some times quoting illustrations from the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna and the living examples of the wonderful life of the Master and his illustrious pupil, Swami Vivekananda. People felt something original in his conversations and the Bhaktas who heard Swami Vivekananda's conversations felt and admitted that next to Swami Vivekananda he ranked as the best conversationalist. Then he went to Madras and Bangalore and when he came to Belur again, Bhaktas used to go to him for his darsan, conversation and his illuminating discourse on Hiudu Philosophy. Even in the sittings of the meetings of the Ramakrishna Mission his figure was most conspicuous on account of his brilliant discourses on Sri Ramakrishna; Swami Vivekananda and comparative study of the eastern and western cultural aspects. Even at that time if he was invited by any

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Bhakta or gentleman of the Calcutta Town, some of the followers of Sri Ramakrishna used to go there to enjoy his holy company and conversation. The late Mr. Manmohan Gangooly B. C. E., Engineer who wrote a well-known book on Orisa's Architecture and whose name was then known far and wide going to Bangalore on tour remained in the Math and enjoyed the holy company of Swami Nirmalanandaji. In monthly magazines he wrote on that tour mentioning the name of Swami Nirmalanandaji and giving a description of his character and life. He was full of admiration for him. He was my friend and spoke to me personally about the pleasant and holy company he enjoyed at Bangalore. In 1916, he came to take Swami Brahmanandaji to Bangalore Ashrama. I also accompanied them in that journey. Some times we used to talk together about Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. At that time when we were alone, he used to sing a Vaishnava song of Radhakrishna composed by Girish Babu, the world renouned dramatist and a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. He used to sing that song with the utmost emotion and devotion and at times tears trickled from his eyes. Though he was a man of great control, yet he yielded to his emotion when he could not suppress his feelings of love and devotion. We halted about a week there at the Madras Math when Swami Sharvananda was in charge. When we reached Bangalore we found that many respectable official and non-official gentlemen were present to receive Swami Brahmananda on the Railway Platform. Swami Brahmanandaji was very glad when he saw the Ashrama; he asked me to write the full descriptions of the Ashrama to Swami Premanandaji mentioning the nice work done there. Swami Nirmalanandaji's work for the untouchables was very grand and Swami Brahmananda used to praise him during his absence. With his remarkable ability, Swami Nirmalanandaji was all attention to the comforts of all the people of the Ashrama. He used to look after Swami Brahmanandaji as the true representative of Sri Ramakrishna. He used

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to tell us that Maharaji is the Manasa Putra of Sri Ramakrishna. He is not an adopted child of worldly people, but a true inheritant of Thakur's spirituality. He is a spiritual giant. He himself, during the morning and evening, bowed before him and took the dust of his feet and often stood before him with folded hands. He often warned us that we must not make any difference between Maharaji and Thakur while paying our homage to Maharaji. He told us that Thakur is living in his body. We saw Swami Nirmalanandaji paying kind and affectionate attention to untouchable men and women who came to the Math. Even the menials of the Math were very fond of him and he used to help them with money and other things.

One instance I am giving as a personal illustration —as my sacred memory. When I went to the Bangalore Math I had Rs. 130 with me. I kept them with him lest it be lost. I purchased cloth, shoes and other necessary things asking money from him. He used to pay me. But after 2 months, Maharaji ordered me to go on pilgrimage, alone in South India. When I asked the balance of my money from Swami Nirmalananda, to my utter surprise he paid me back Rs. 130 in full. I was astonished and asked him why the whole amount of Rs. 130 was returned to me. 'I think, I spent nearly 30 or 40. You paid me and you have totally forgotten that'. Swami Nirmalanandaji laughed and said: 'Oh! you took that—Thakur's money—not mine. Your money is there.' Then I told him 'how can I take Thakur's money' 'Oh! you came to His Ashrama, you know, and He looks after all these expenses. I am not to interfere and I cannot take money.' Then I insisted on his taking Rs. 50 for Thakur. He returned it with folded hands, in a loving and most tender and humble manner he told me: 'We are all His children. You should not think otherwise. Now according to the order of Maharaji, you are going on a pilgrimage. You are to travel in foreign land alone. So you must not spend a single farthing from this money. If you obey Maharaji's

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orders fully, then Thakur will be more pleased and that will be greater service to Him than offering Him money or any other thing. So, you should not bother your head. If you are in difficulty, then write to me without hesitation and I shall be very glad to be of any service to you."

He did many things secretly for the benefit of the people and for the institution. He did not like name and fame. He was an out and out Sadhu. He used to live so simply and so unostentatiously that one would not imagine that a man of his position can live in that way. There was no hankering after name, fame or money. He liked gardening. Spending his time in garden and at the same time looking after everything for the comforts of the Bhaktas and Sadhus of the Ashrama and preaching high truth to the truth-seekers, truly he was a man of plane living and high thinking.

Sri S. K. Yajnanarayana Iyer M.A., (Hons.) the then Principal of Salem College (Now English Lecturer, Pachaiyappa College, Madras) writes :—

I had the privilege of knowing the late Swami Nirmalanandaji of revered memory. Every year during my stay at Salem (1917-22) he would halt at Salem on his way from Bangalore to Malabar and Travancore or on his way back and my friend and neighbour, the late Mr. B. V. Namagiri would be his host. On all these occasions I had the privilege of requesting him to have his Bhiksha with me one day. Every member of my family knew him and he knew them and was particularly fond of my children. He was pleased to invite me to Bangalore to deliver the address on the occasion of the celebration of Gnrumaharaji's Birthday in 1920 or 1921. Mr. Namagiri and myself spent three days with Swamiji as our host and an ideal host he was.

His was a very impressive personality and there were many aspects of it which only those who knew him

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intimately could appreciate. He was an expert gardener and was a master in the art of grafting. He took a genuine delight in showing his guests round his garden at Bangalore. He had a keen sense of humour and would crack jokes endlessly and often against himself! He used to say that he alone was a real Vedantin and not others because he had lost all his teeth and hence was a Vi-danta and Vi-dantasya bhavah—Vedanta!

He was a direct disciple of Gurumaharaj and therefore very great spiritually; he was equally eminent in worldly matters as well and if he set his heart upon a thing he would achieve it in the minimum possible time and no detail, however trivial, would escape his attention. I consider it a privilege that I had the good fortune to meet him so often and listen to his inspiring talks.

In "the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna" translated by Swami Nikhilananda and published in 1942 from "Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre," 17-East 91th Street, New York City, there is the following statement on the 63rd page of the introduction.

"Sarada and Tulasi".

Two more young men, Sarada Prasanna and Tulasi, complete the small band of the Master's disciples later to embrace the life of the wandering monks. With the exception of the elder Gopal, all of them were in their teens or slightly over. They came from middle-class Bengali families and most of them were students in school or college. Their parents and relatives had envisaged for them bright wordly careers. They came to Sir Ramakrishna with pure bodies, vigorous minds and uncontaminated souls. All were born with unusual spiritual attributes. Sri Ramakrishna accepted them, even at first sight, as his children, relatives friends, and companions. His magic touch unfolded them. And later, each according to his measure reflected the life of the Master, becoming a torch-bearer of His message across land and and sea." Again in page 976 of the

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Gospel :—"Hari and Tulasi, at first only visitors at the monastery, soon embraced the monastic life and thus completed the list of the Master's Sanyasin disciples."

In pages 1223 and 1224 Vol. IV of the Bengali Book 'Jibani Kosh', published by Sri Sasi Bhushan Vidyalankara, it is stated as follows :—

SWAMI NIRMALANANDA.

Swami Nirmalananda was one of the Antaranga Sishyas and Lila Sahacharas of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa Deva. He was born in the famous Datta family of Bosepara Lane, Baghbazaar, Calcutta. His father's name was Devanatha Dutta. The name of Swami Nirmalananda before Sanyas was Tulasi-charan Dutta. Even from boyhood he was devoted to sprirituality. While he was a student of about 18 years old he met Sri Ramakrishna for the first time in the house of Balaram Bose at Bagh-bazaar and thus came within the sphere of his influence. After this, Tulasi used to frequent Daksh-ineswar. Along with his other co-disciples he earnestly served Sri Ramakrishna in Cossipore Garden House. In 1886, after Sri Ramakrishna's Mahasamadhi, he joined some of his co-disciples in establishing the order of Sri Ramakrishna in a rented house. He with another co-disciple managed the monastery with all his heart and soul and with unremitting zeal and exertions. Afterwards he was elected as the first Assistant Secretary in the Executive Committee set up under the direction of Swami Vivekananda. In 1903 he went to America to assist Swami Abhedananda in the work of spreading Sri Ramakrishna's gospel and in 1906 he returned to India. His work in America was highly appreciated. From 1906 to 1909 he travelled to various places of pilgrimage and was immersed in hard tapas in the Himalayas. When a Ramakrishna Ashrama was established in Mysore State Swami Nirmalananda assumed its charge at the call of Swami Brahmananda.

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From that time for the long period of twenty-nine years he applied himself unstintedly to the task of spreading the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in many places in South India. He was simple, magnanimous and frank and at the same time resolute, strong and unflinching in a good cause. In 1929 when the Vivekananda Mission and the Ramakrishna Sarada Math were established in Calcutta he accepted the presidentship of both at the pressing request of the members and the devotees; he continued in this capacity till the very last. He has innumerable Sanyasin and Grihastha disciples in various parts of India. In April 1938, he passed away at Ottapalam Ashrama in South India.

A disciple of the Swamiji writes :—

I had the good fortune to come in contact with Tulasi Maharaj. It was more than a quarter of a century ago that I first saw him from the house of a devotee at Trivandrum. From the day I met him first, I know from my heart of hearts that he began to love me and treat me as a pet child. He was more than an earthly father to me. Words can't describe what attracted me towards him—his sincere and ardent love. Whenever I used to take leave of him after my visits, he would simply say with very great affection, 'You must come again'. In accordance with his words or command, I used to go to him as often as practicable. The more I came in contact with him, the more I thought of him and desired to stay and enjoy his presence. But to my utter disappointment and sorrow, he used to come to Kerala once in a year or so. After a few years I could meet him once at Ottapalam too, at the house of a devotee. This meeting also strengthened our mutual love in several ways. At Ottapalam, I could invite him freely and enjoy his presence on many occasions. It was at this period that the Trivandrum Ashrama was opened. Thereafter I could spend days together with my Revered Sri Swamiji and his Sanyasin disciples to my hearts entire satisfaction. I even

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decided to leave off my earthly connections so that I might be able to seek shelter at his holy feet for my spiritual emancipation. But, something unexpected happened and I was compelled by the Lord's will to attend to some important secular affairs for a few years. Though I had to shoulder some great responsibility during this period, everything came to a successful termination through the grace of Sri Ramakrishna Deva and blessings of Sri Swamiji. Many were the occasions on which their helping hands saved me from great risks. Truly speaking, this was a period of trial in my life. In accordance with my heart's desire and through the blessings of my Guru Deva, I could leave off everything and stay with him at Trivandrum, Bangalore and Ottapalam for months and years together. How I enjoyed those days in the midst of many troubles and tribulations, I can't explain. Many letters from Sir Swamiji, full of love, have consoled me to a great extent and I have retained them still with me. I have to say out of my personal experience that those days I spent with him were really an eye-opener to me. For want of space, I do not write here, even some very important points by which I could shape my spiritual life. May all of us be guided by him. May Sri Ramakrishna Deva and Sri Swamiji bless us all to attain the highest aim of this human life.

Brahmanandam paramasukhadam kevalam
jnanamurthim

Dvandvateetam gagana sadrisam tatvamasyadi
lakshyam

Akam nityam vimalamachalam sarvadhee
sakshibhootam

Bhavateetam trigunarahitam satgurum twam
namami

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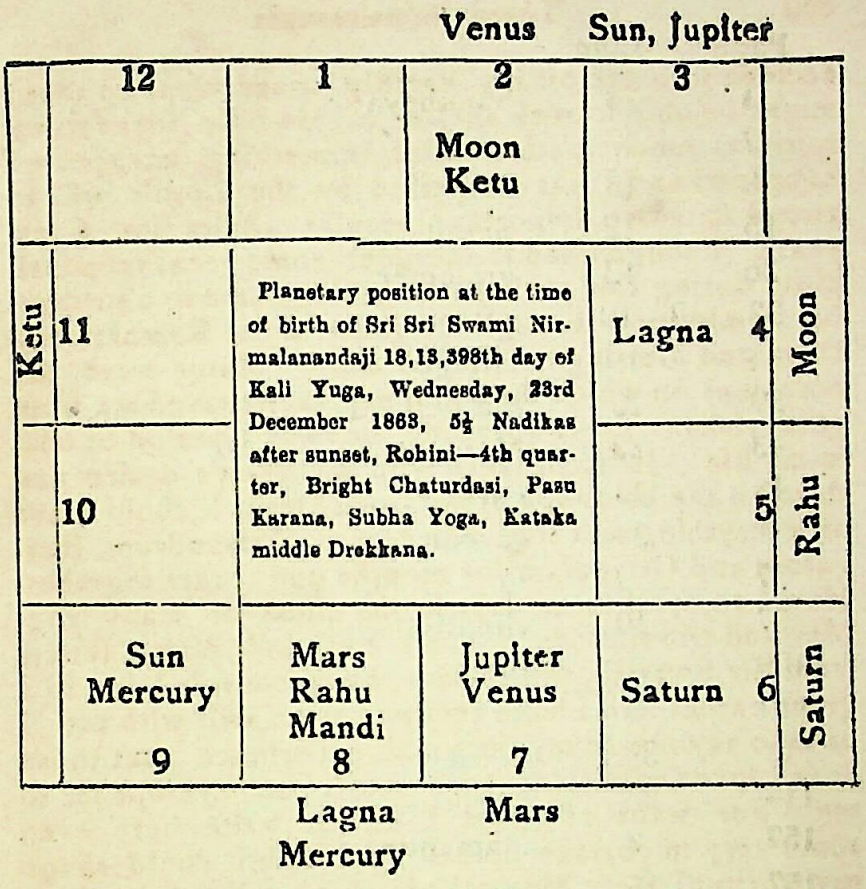

The Signs of the Zodiac.

1 Aries.	7. Libra.
2. Taurus.	8. Scorpio.
3. Gemini.	9. Sagittarius.
4. Cancer.	10. Capricornus.
5. Leo.	11 Aquarius.
6. Virgo.	12. Pisces

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ERRATA.

Page	Line	For	Read
1	1	Sankheya	Sankhyeya
7	17	roboust	robust
8	13	annual	and annual
15	12	Sarad	Sarada
26	12	grammer	grammar
33	9—10	after noon	after-noon
34	19	villege	village
39	10	Saratchanda	Saratchandra
43	22	Mothers	Mother's
48	13	curse	course
51	34	favourit	favourite
57	2	to	for
57	10	ritualism and	ritualism. He
109	10	passed	was passed
110	7	for	of
113	39	anecdots	anecdotes
114	25	Yogin	Yoga
157	2	adamantine	adamant
157	15	year	years
160	11	Amalananda and	Amalananda, Ambananda and
166	28	hy	by
170	13	on	of
172	24	sourse	source
173	14	leading	lending
"	21	sides	side
"	"	know	know,
174	18	hody	body
176	36	dellvered	delivered
185	37	varthine	varthinah

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ERRATA—(*Contd.*)

Page	Line	For	Read
192	20	Man	men
196	5	solely	sorely
204	23	complimentary	complementary
205	21	Mri	Mrid
224	19	Ghandhi	Gandhi
225	18	former	formal
228	10	immovable	immoveable
233	1	A.	Q.
240	7	spend	spend for
,,	23	pertains	pertain
242	5	Vedabhyasah	Vedabhyasad
243	15	amsi tatwam	Amritatwam
249	17	owfully	awfully
249	35	sence	sense
252	28	imbined	imbibed
253	19	for	of
254	5	greather	greater
256	4	pravadan'. ti	pravadanti'.
257	9	ot	of
260	2	the smiles	the place of smiles
,,	5	it, eagerly	it eagerly,
261	7	raising	rising
265	17	of even	even of
270	34	woold	would
273	14	raised	raises
280	13	once	ones
282	8	Brahman	Brahman,
287	23	have	has
300	18	commanders	commander's
,,	27	also	so

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ERRATA—(Contd.)

Page	Line	For	Read
310	1	provisions	provision
	22	say	say anything
316	9	not to upset	not upset
320	6	thankiag	thanking
	32	yau	you
323	10	identify with	identify itself with
325	16	simply	merely
	17	So also did	Nor did so
338	25	on	over
347	22	from	with
354	24	therefore	thereby
357	7	is no	is of no
371	20	will	would
375	30	dullard	a dullard
395	33	effective	efficacious
437	28	circute	circuit
439	22	inclimed	inclined
440	22	fishes	flashes
442	12	worthy	worth
443	27-28	is who	who
446	18	stength	strength
447	29	discord	discard
452	21	tnto	into
453	13	doudt	doubt
	35	gettidg	getting
480	26	penomenal	phenomenal
487	22	precocious	precarious
489	24	intself	itself
493	9	precocious	preposterous
496	10	births	birth
498	18	capitals	capitalists
500	7	craddle	cradle
503	1	true as	as true
505	29	An Indian	Indians
509	17	adout	about
511	9	require	requite
528	21	carrier	career
552	9	came	come

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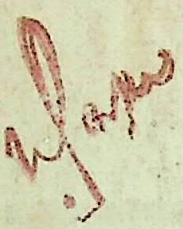

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